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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

FINDING BALANCE IN A FAMILY OF ONE:
TIME USE IN SINGLE PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

KIMBERLY E. FOX
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2009

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For Dad and Peter Whalley

who remind me to make the most of the time I have

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the lives of people living alone, particularly their efforts to negotiate and create social boundaries to support a healthy work-life balance. The findings show that people living alone are a diverse segment of the U.S. population and that these individuals work more hours, spend less time on activities at home, and more time with people outside of their home than individuals living with others. People living alone are their own primary caregivers and must find time for self-care and household maintenance in the midst of working and developing meaningful relationships. Without traditional external obligations to structure their time, tensions develop between the desires to construct autonomous lives and establish connections with others. To develop a healthy balance between work and life, people living alone must find ways to sustain their lives outside of work; limit the influence of work on their time; negotiate competing demands among family, relatives, friends, and personal needs; and develop supportive relationships.

This project begins to address a gap in the study of work-life balance that neglects individuals living alone. The number of people living alone in the United States continues to grow; yet they are an unstudied population in sociology. People in single person households have rich lives of multiple connections and provide much to our workforce and social networks. They are part of complex social networks that provide social, psychological and sometimes economic support, and sometimes struggle to integrate their social and family life with their work life. Utilizing the American Time Use Survey (ATUS)

and twenty-two in-depth interviews, this mixed method study examines how individuals living alone spend time differently than those living with partners and children, and how people living alone understand and feel about their time. These findings have implications beyond this study to suggest that our national and workforce policies should be realigned to support individuals living alone, as well as those who live with others.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The relationship between work and life in single person households is an unstudied area in sociology; yet, a growing percentage of the U.S. population is living alone. The number of adults living alone grew from 17 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 2003, making these single person households one of the fastest growing household constellations in the population (Fields 2003). Moreover, urban adults, ages 18-54, will spend 50% of their lives single (Laumann et al. 2004). These adults are part of complex social networks that provide social, psychological and sometimes economic support. Single person households struggle to integrate their own social and family life with their work life. Recent studies examined the social relationships of single adults but spent limited time on the work-life balance of these individuals (DePaulo 2006; Trimberger 2006). While research on work-life balance focused on how dual career couples and parents attempt balance between realms but has little focus on individuals without children or partners (Presser 2003; Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

Still another group of researchers examined the changing nature of involvement in the community. This led to debates about whether civic engagement is on the decline or just changing from formal civic associations to informal networks (Ladd 1999; Putnam 2000). A look at the changing form of networks increased an interest in the role that the workplace and friendships play in the lives of individuals (Allan 2008; Dahlin, Kelly, and

Moen 2008; Pahl and Spencer 2005; and Roseneil 2004). It is in this realm of relationship building and community engagement where individuals living alone are most impacted. Finding balance for people living alone is a negotiation between not just work and home but work, home, and friendship.

This study is one step in bridging the gap of understanding the connection between work and life for individuals living alone. I examine the time use among adults who live alone to better understand the constraints and freedoms in developing a manageable work-life balance. With the growing recognition that people are struggling to find time to develop meaningful relationships in this economy, this research has policy implications not only for individuals who live alone as well as the larger population. Looking at single person households provides us with a lens to understand how work, economic, and social policies impact those outside the intended beneficiaries. This research underscores how work impacts mental and economic well-being as well as how social relationships and life expectations are formed when constrained by work. In addition, the study looks at how the experience of living alone and balancing work and life differs across gender, race and class divides in single person households. Finally, it highlights where economic relationships intersect with personal needs.

Studying Single Person Households

To begin this investigation, I examine what is known about the work and life constraints in traditional family arrangements as compared to single people in “non-family” households. The lack of literature on single people in American society points to a need for research on this growing segment of the population. This research adds to the literature

on work-life balance with the inclusion of an oft-marginalized group, single adults who live alone. It helps understand how time is controlled through work; how social networks are created; and how time at work and time at home both constrain and facilitate the creation of social networks for individuals without social networks at home.

The primary questions that will guide my study are:

- a) Do people who live alone spend their time at work differently than people living with others?
- b) Are there trends in how singles living alone spend their time outside of work?
- c) Do age, race, gender and work impact people living alone differently than people living with others?
- d) How do individuals living alone undertake the “family” tasks of feeding, housework and the establishment of meaningful relationships?
- e) How do individuals living alone make sense of their ability to balance time at work, at home, and with others?

This research is a first step in providing a clearer picture of those differences and how they are understood. Employing a methodological approach that utilizes multiple methods of inquiry, integrating the research design and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative methods, and not treating them as purely separate components, I look at both the context of time use for individuals living alone as well as how individuals make sense of their own time. Using American Time Use Survey data, I compare single person households to other household constellations in their use of time in paid work, household work, leisure and social life activities.

After situating single person households in relation to others, I examine demographic and workplace characteristics, such as gender, age, race, and work shift, that impact an individual's time. By including in-depth personal interviews to this study, I add another level of understanding about how men and women who live alone make sense of the balance between work and life in their own lives. Studying the work-life balance in the lives of single person households using this mixed methods approach uncovers both how time is spent in single person households and a struggle between autonomy and connection in finding balance.

Importance of Studying Singles

As indicated already, family is an increasingly fluid construct. The Census Bureau defines a family as "two or more persons related by birth, marriage or adoption who reside in the same household" (U.S. Census Bureau). While this analytic definition of family may be necessary for collecting census data it neglects the experience of a growing percentage of the population. People never married, not cohabitating or living alone are included in the census data as "non-family" households along with cohabitating couples without children and college roommates. Over the last 30 years the number of single adults living alone has grown from 17 percent of the population to 26 percent in 2003. This number has continued to grow since the last report. As single adults, these individuals are not separate units but part of social networks that provide social, psychological and sometimes economic support.

Our reliance on defining family by blood and/or legal relationships neglects the ways that "non-family" households create social networks that function as families. There

has been some discussion of building family relationships among “non-family” households within the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer (GLBTQ) community, such as the work by Kath Weston (1991), but there is limited research on how singles, no matter their sexual orientation, create and interact as family. If “non-family” households are in extended and functioning family relationships with others, should this not be called family? Where then do these singles and “non-family” groups fit in the sociology of the family? And, as important, what are the impacts of different social institutions on these groups as they try to develop and establish relationships that function as family?

These intimate social relationships draw attention to the functional role that families play in people’s lives rather than the prescriptive roles. These social relationships are becoming more common as people delay marriage, cohabitate, and get divorced. The functions of family - for individuals and in society - continue to change. Looking at singles living alone is important because this growing group of individuals has been marginalized in the previous literature on the family. While these singles living alone do not have the same struggles to balance caretaking of children as their married colleagues, they still must find ways to complete the activities associated with creating a home, such as coordinating and finishing meal preparation, while connecting with their extended families and communities. Additionally, individuals living alone are often responsible for aging parents that do not live with them while they are also responsible for managing their own lives. The inclusion of this group provides insight into the diversity of family life in the United States and opens the door to research and policy which incorporates those who do not fit into the “traditional” family unit.

At the same time, geographic, economic and technological mobility allow for more distance between individuals and their biological family members. This distance and an increasing acceptance of family-like friendships have increased the importance of friendships in the lives of “modern” individuals. Although there have been concerns about the decline of community engagement, people living alone are largely engaged with others on a variety of levels. Unlike fairly codified understandings, friendships are not as easily defined and problematic to study. Nonetheless, people living alone manage a range of relationships including on-going family connections, close knit friendship groups, and fleeting work and community acquaintances.

With the growing recognition that people are struggling to find time to develop relationships in this economy, this research looks at the important inter-institutional relationships between work, family and community that impacts how our lives develop and change. This research adds to the literature on how these institutions both support and challenge one another. Changes happen through the interactions of people and institutions and this research looks at both.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation hopes to begin a discussion of how individuals who live alone find balance in their lives. However, this is only the first step in an area of research that needs more study and has many dimensions. I attempt to provide a complete and engaging look at the lives of individuals living alone. While each chapter has an individual focus, they each fit together to provide a more complete understanding of how balance is attempted – and sometimes achieved – for people living alone. While the focus is on individuals living

alone, many forms of relationships can benefit from a better understanding of the connections and divisions felt by those living alone.

Chapter 2 outlines the research underlying this dissertation. As noted previously, there has been little research into the lives, and particularly the time use, in single person households. Rather than finding questions in research on individuals living alone, this research finds its place in the questions of family, work, community, and friendship. The chapter begins with a discussion of research on work-life balance and the change in community involvement to show how these issues are connected, particularly for people living alone. This includes a discussion of the growing research on the sociology of friendship that bridges relationships between family and community and is particularly relevant for individuals living alone.

Following a review of the relevant literature, Chapter 3 lays out the plan for studying people living alone. I believe that multiple methods of research provides a deeper understanding of phenomena, particularly when looking at a group of people, like singles living alone, who have been neglected. I provide my rationale for using mixed methods. I also describe how the nationally representative American Time Use Survey (ATUS) is used to gain an understanding of the time use in single person households and how in-depth interviews add to that knowledge.

Chapter 4 begins the substantive analysis of the situation of individuals living alone. Using descriptive statistics and interview anecdotes, this chapter compares the population demographics of single adults, coupled adults, coupled parents and single parents. I show that singles living alone are not merely young adults waiting to become couples or older adults living alone after death of a partner or divorce. Rather, singles are

spread throughout the population. Additionally, the chapter looks at the time each group spends on important activities, including work, household maintenance, personal care, sleep, leisure, dining, socializing, and community involvement. This analysis sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation

Building off of the differences established in the previous chapter, Chapter 5 looks more closely at the significance of living alone as well as gender, age, race, and workforce status on time use. Using OLS regression, I show that living alone is a predictor of time use related to work, household maintenance, household leisure, and time with others. Indeed, living alone impacts time use on most categories. Additionally, I show how gender, race, age, education, and household income are statistically important as well as workforce characteristics, such as occupation, work shift, and pay type.

The findings in Chapters 4 and 5 show that living alone is an important characteristic in one's use of time; however, they only tell part of the story. They do not help us better understand what these differences mean to people actually living alone. Chapter 6 examines how individuals living alone talk about their time alone and with others. From the interviews, it is apparent that those interviewed enjoy their time alone but also work to remain engaged with others. The study shows that those living alone actively work to create autonomous lives while maintaining connections to friends and family. Through the process of establishing their independence tension around the desire to be with others and the stigma of living alone present themselves.

Chapter 7 expands on this look at the tension between autonomy and connections to see how balance is defined, challenged, and created. The study shows that individuals living alone have strong ideas of what it means to find balance between work and life but

must define their own boundaries in their life that will allow for the realization of their ideal balance. With a lack of symbolic boundaries that being a parent or partner provide, individuals living alone develop strategies to help gain balance. Through creating self-defined boundaries, protecting work schedules, limiting work friendships, establishing priorities, and sustaining outside relationships, individuals living alone actively define boundaries between work and life to establish their own balance.

The conclusion, Chapter 8 summarizes the findings in the four substantive chapters. I show how each of the elements explored in the individual chapters work together to provide a better understanding of the attempt to find balance and maintain well-being in the lives of individuals living alone. Issues, such as work time, make balance and well-being difficult for everyone, not just those living alone. I point out the policy and cultural implications that can provide a better space for balance in the lives of all individuals. There are limitations in this study and I show how those limitations leave openings for many more studies of individuals living alone and singles.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between work and life in single person households is an unstudied area in sociology. Yet, with a growing percentage of the U.S. population living alone, this leaves a large gap in our understanding of economic arrangements and social relationships at home and in the community. Between 1970 and 2003, the number of adults living alone grew from 17 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 2003, making these single person households one of the fastest growing household constellations in the population (Fields 2003). Over those three decades, the population of men living alone has grown from 5.6% to 11.2% and the population of women living alone has grown from 11.5% to 15.2% (Fields 2003). Similarly, Laumann et al (2004) suggests that urban adults, ages 18-54, will spend 50% of their lives single. These adults may live alone but they are not separate units, rather, they are part of complex social networks that provide social, psychological and sometimes economic support. They are responsible for all the obligations associated with work along with the obligations of home and community. While not sharing space with others, single person households struggle to integrate their own social and family life with their work life. They must play the role of primary breadwinner and caretaker in their own lives.

The majority of the research on work-life balance focuses attention on the struggles of dual career families and single parents along with the impact that gender, race and class

differences have on work and life. Research on work-life balance focuses on the difficulty in maintaining a family in the midst of an increasingly demanding work schedule but authors like Elinor Burkett (2000), suggest that a focus on “traditional” family leaves those without children at a disadvantage. Still, there is limited focus on how these struggles affect those without children. DePaulo (2006) extends this research to include single adults and delineates many of the ways that society stigmatizes singles through an emphasis on coupling in popular culture and disadvantages singles in federal policy such as social security. Trimberger (2006) highlights women who have chosen to remain single and their attempts to resist the societal focus on coupling. While these studies give voice to the concerns of single adults in our society as well as broaden our views of how people live, there is still little known about how adults who live alone interact with the larger social institutions, such as the economy and family.

In her study on non-standard work hours, Presser (2003) notes that men and women who are not married work more non-standard work hours than those with a spouse present. If non-standard work hours are detrimental to the health and well-being of individuals, then those without support systems at home may be particularly susceptible. Yet, there is little written about how single adults living alone, engage at work, at home, and in the community. The research on community involvement and social capital suggests that Americans’ involvement in the community is geared toward more informal relationships if not declining altogether (Putnam 1996, 2000; Ladd 1999). These changes are tied to the changes in the work environment yet this research does little to engage the research on changes in time spent at work and at home. For individuals who live alone, informal relationships in the community, as well as friendships at work, and on-going

relationships with extended family are important elements in the development of social and economic support networks that are necessary for health and well-being.

A study by Gerstel and Sarkisian (2006) shows that while controlling for class, race, education, and age, singles – both men and women – are more likely to spend time with parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors than their married counterparts. This research suggests that singles are heavily involved in the life of their communities and maintenance of numerous relationships. Even so, there is limited research on how living alone affects work-life balance and the maintenance of these relationships. As a population that is both constrained by longer and more erratic work hours but still engaged with those around them, studying adults living alone can uncover the complex social forces that impact the interplay of work and life. Similarly, these individuals can provide insights into gender, race, and class inequality among the larger population as they do not have a partner, spouse, or roommate to play into or against their gendered, raced, and classed tendencies.

This chapter provides an overview of the arguments regarding time spent at work, at home, and in the community as well as why studying time use in single person households is a useful lens for understanding the connection between time in a variety of arenas.

Changing Workplaces

Over the last 40 years, there have been major shifts in the way work is organized. The domestic economy has shifted from one that produces goods to one that consumes products and provides services. This shift occurred as corporations began to consolidate their resources on an international level and extend the boundaries for their creation and

consumption of goods. The relationship between workers and jobs has been reorganized from a local system to a global one. Similarly, new technological advances have changed the relationship between location and output by allowing more flexibility in the production of goods and greater reach in the marketing. Through technology, manufacturing has seen a growth in productivity with a loss in workforce while the service industry has seen a growth in workers across the globe. The relocation of manufacturing to other countries means fewer opportunities for stable occupations among blue-collar occupations in the United States.

Declining job opportunities and wages made it necessary for women to join the labor force in greater numbers and created a “pink-collar economy” along side the blue collar economy. Additionally, in the 1980’s and 1990’s people in the professional, white collar workforce became subject to similar declines in job security, salary and opportunity. This loss of manufacturing jobs and increase in interactive service work - from employees in worldwide call centers to the local fast food restaurants - has lead to a fundamental change in the organization of time for individuals and families.

This move away from industrial jobs has gained labels such as the information society, knowledge society, or post-industrial society. Work relationships have become more flexible although not always to the advantage of the workers. The advances in technology and changes in the economic system led some theorists to posit that work is becoming obsolete or at least limited to those with cultural capital and technological skills (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994; Bell 1973). The “post-industrial society” idea suggests that technological advances separate individuals based on the ability to acquire knowledge, technological skills, and professional employment.

However, growth in the service sector has not occurred in more advanced professional class positions but in low-paying service sector jobs and technology is not determining how people work but is controlled by employers and used to control workers (Crompton 1984; Gallie et. al 1998; Kumar 1978). Robert Reich (1991) suggests that a relatively small percentage of employees are gaining from advanced technological skills while the majority of American workers are part of service jobs that are routine and mundane whether in computer call centers or restaurant service work. Steven Vallas (1993) shows that there is a mix of change happening through changes in the labor processes with traditional de-skilling among the clerical employees and operators and advanced skills among the workers in the field.

These changes in economic relationships have a large impact on the lives of individual workers. With a decrease in industrial jobs and an increase in service sector positions, employees have less job security as well as lower wages. These changes disproportionately affect people at the lower end of the economic sector, particularly women and people of color. However, the changes also provide room for flexibility among workers and employers.

New Work Arrangements

Most recent observers of work agree that technology has changed the relationship between employees and their work. The new economy requires changes in the way which workers are both able and expected to work. These new changes have led to a growth in new and “non-standard” work arrangements, which rely on a different relationship between employer and employee than normally expected (Kalleberg 2000). In previous

generations, it was expected that a worker would find a job, work full-time, and maintain employment for that employer and in the same place throughout one's career. This has been the standard work arrangement for much of the employed male U.S. population during the last century; globalization, technological changes, increasing labor force participation of women and older workers, and a sluggish economy have led to a growth of alternative work arrangements. These arrangements consist of shift work, part-time work, temporary & contingent employment, and independent contracting & self-employment. Rather than being tied to a strict nine-to-five schedule the economy has become one that runs 24/7 (Presser 2003).

While much is made of the possibility of flexibility within these new arrangements, the employers or economic necessity influences how, when and why employees take advantage of these work arrangements (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005; Evans, Kunda and Barley 2004; Meiskins and Whalley 2002). Additionally, these positions provide a way for employers to cut costs and still fill needed positions but with similar controls over the work product and time of employees (Coverdill and Oulevey 2007; Henson 1996; Henson and Rogers 2001; Kalleberg 2000; Rogers and Henson 1997; Rogers 1995; Tilly 1996).

Nonstandard work may be seen as a step toward full time employment for some and for others it may provide additional income or flexible schedules. The type of nonstandard work that one undertakes and willingness to engage in it depends on the skills and resources of individual workers as well as the larger economic climate. However, most research shows that the level of nonstandard employment is tied to the needs of employers and their ability to be flexible and not the needs and desires of employees. When unemployment is low, the number of people involved in nonstandard work is also

low. People will choose to work full time if the opportunities are available and usually choose non-standard employment when full time work is unavailable. While there is a range of autonomy and control in many non-standard positions, they all provide limited benefits to employees. Therefore, individuals who choose or are relegated to non-standard work hours and positions must rely on their own resources for health insurance, retirement funds and other fringe benefits or go without these safety nets. This puts the burden of care on individuals rather than companies or the government.

Work and Time

As the economy changes to require more work from some and more opportunities for flexibility in other situations, workers are often caught in a bind. While researchers have noted that less skilled jobs do not have the opportunities for flexibility that are often available in more skilled and professional positions, it is often these unskilled workers who are struggling to get enough hours in at the job and the professional workers who are trying to work fewer hours. Much research has pointed out that the economic changes in the United States make it costly to work fewer hours for both populations. Workers who gain from overtime and those working part-time jobs are often struggling for more hours of work to supplement their incomes. Additionally, positions that utilize skilled professionals have created work environments that put pressure for on them for extra hours and being available on call at off hours (Drago, Tseng, and Wooden 2005; Epstein and Kalleberg 2004; Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Reynolds 2005).

Juliet Schor (1991, 1998) shows that the current economic system has made it difficult to find time for leisure, while simultaneously making leisure seem more desirable

and more expensive. The consumerist society provides for more opportunities and excitement outside work, but these also cost more money. The irony is that people need to work more to enjoy leisure activities. Job insecurity, on the other hand, requires that people work more hours to maintain their status in the employment sector. Using Current Population Survey (CPS) data, Schor details that Americans are spending an additional month of time at work in a year. This makes for less time for leisure at the same time as leisure activities become more appealing.

However, Robinson and Godbey (1999) challenge Schor's analysis. Robinson and Godbey challenge the use of CPS data that allows respondents to subjectively articulate their time spent at work. This may cause an over exaggeration of work time. Instead, they use a time diary project that takes one day of work and multiply it by five to develop a figure for weekly work time. In their estimation, Americans are spending less time at work and only feel as if they are spending more time.

This analysis is also challenged in that it assumes a standard 5-day work schedule and the recent changes in work show that more non-standard work is being completed. Jacobs and Gerson (1998) follow this up with a note that an increase in time spent at "prestigious" jobs is leading the growth in time spent at work while those in lower status jobs are struggling for hours. Therefore, people on the outer ends of the work schedule are misrepresented in the work of both Schor and Robinson and Godbey. Additionally, Jacobs and Gerson also note that it is important to look at couples jointly rather than as individual workers. When more people in the family who are working will lead to greater stress in time. They have limited time at home together for other activities including those in the community.

Inequality in Work

The changes in the workplace do not affect all individuals equally. Women, and increasingly women of color, hold pink-collar or clerical positions that have seen a loss of skill and prestige while white men are over represented in skilled and knowledge positions that give them more flexibility, control, and esteem in the job market and it is widely acknowledged that most part-time workers are women (Feldman 1990, Tilly 1996; Blossfeld and Hakim 1997, Fagan and O'Reilly 1998). Additionally, nonstandard shift work is more prevalent among non-Hispanic blacks, of both genders (Presser 2003; Grosswald 2004; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005). The impetus for and outcome of non-standard work hours is different depending on one's social position, allowing women with advanced education and a spouse's income (and benefits) to take more advantage of flexible self-employment and part-time work (Carr 1996; Connelly and Rhoton 1988; Meiskins and Whalley 2002).

Work is an important arena that constrains the time of workers from all social positions although women and people of color are more detrimentally affected by changes in work. Work is an important place that constrains one's use of time. As more families find they need to have two incomes to make ends meet, the stresses between time at work and time at home grow. Additionally, single parents and adults who live alone must find time to care for self and others while at the same time working enough to make ends meet. These constraints on time use have led to a struggle for time between work and family.

Struggling Families

The structural changes in the economy noted above create a system where people must struggle to balance the time resources available for family and work. Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson (2004) note the “time divide” between work and home is more complex than just working too much and not being home enough. They posit five types of divides: work-family divide, which is the focus of much of the research on family and work; occupational divide, which points to differing time constraints based on occupation differences; aspirational divide, which notes that people with different job opportunities and family structures want different amounts of work; parenting divide, which supports different time needs between parents and non-parents; and gender divide, which shows that men and women (particularly those with children) expect and are expected to split their time between home and work differently.

This battle between the time spent at work and at home brought about appeals for flex-time and family leave policies but those solutions are not as simple or helpful as early claims predicted. The growth in service sector occupations and contingent employment along with technological advancements have allowed for more flexibility of working hours, possibilities of longer working hours, and more porous lines between work and home. Harriett Presser (2003) terms this the 24/7 economy - an economy predicated on work through out the day, week and year. This change in the economic structure makes it more difficult to define boundaries between work and home. These nonstandard work hours are centered mainly in the low-income service sectors and affect a higher proportion of part-time workers with lower levels of education. Often, people without children are expected

to work more than people with children but in reality single mothers must work longer hours and struggle with childcare more than married mothers.

Boundaries between Work and Home

While the service sector is a major site of the 24/7 economy, many sectors of the new economy are utilizing technologies that increase working hours and decrease the boundaries between work and home (Montgomery et. al. 2005). Looking at the software engineering and call center fields, Jeff Hyman, Dora Scholarios, and Chris Baldry (2005) show that spillover between work and home is apparent in both fields but affects the groups differently. Software engineers, with greater “gender and occupational status,” are better able to manipulate the boundaries while call center workers have less discretion in their time due to more direct management. Nonetheless, software engineers are often expected to work longer hours and cross work-life boundaries when on call. The authors point out that the new economy and technological advances mean the lines between work and life intersect in function, in time, and in space because families can not easily define who is the worker and who is the carer, cannot define when are the work hours and when are home hours, and cannot define what economic sector work is done in the office and what is done at home. These changing opportunities for flexibility and technological advances, while troubling in some aspects, also provide opportunities for people with the right social, professional and financial resources. Flexibility within work - whether achieved through policy changes or personal choices - is only available to some sections of the working population. Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, and Drescher-Burke (2005) note that less privileged workers have less opportunity for flexibility. These workers are

constrained by stricter hourly requirements, reduced wages for fewer hours, and less job security.

Along with these differences in who works part-time versus full-time and how work contributes to inequality, there are larger implications for women and men due to these differences. Kathleen Gerson (2002, 2004) notes that these changes in time and the differences between men and women as well as differences across occupational classes come at a price for society. Currently, we are struggling with what it means to our larger society. Gerson points to the social pressures on women that cause stress in time use as well as the lack of available scripts for women who seek autonomy. Women and men are caught in the bind to live up to their social expectations of what it means to be a good partner and parent as well as the employment expectation of what it means to be a good worker. Employers still assume that employees will commit their time to work whenever necessary because they are indebted to the job.

Robert Drago (2007) notes that this norm of the ideal worker assumes that an ideal worker is one who can give all to the employer and not ask for a lot in return. This means that someone who does not have obligations outside of work will be a better employee because they are not as distracted. In this way, family life becomes problematic for employees. It is expected that workers will be available to the employers at a moment's notice and not require time off or benefits. Those without traditional families are especially threatened by an expectation that they can commit time to work. Elinor Burkett (2000) shows how the ideal worker norm disadvantages employees without children because they are responsible for filling in the gaps when people with children are

unavailable. In this way, the ideal worker norm is used to control a worker's time through coercion but also through marginalizing those without children.

Inequality at Home

The impact of people working longer hours and more women working in paid employment has affected family relationships but not equally. While some companies have made attempts at family friendly workplaces, people are not taking advantage of the family friendly policies. Arlie Hochschild (1997) suggests that one reason for this gap in the use of family friendly policies for women is that there may be more mental and emotional rewards during the time spent at work and there was more stress during the time spent at home. But, as more women join the workforce, however, their roles within the home are not as drastically changed. Hochschild in particular has shown that women continue to manage the brunt of the work in keeping a house and raising a family even when working full-time. As more time is spent at work, stress increases at home. This cycle continues to increase and work becomes a refuge from home. The basic problem with these family friendly policies is the slow movement in changing gender roles and a lack of respect for what are seen as traditional female spheres. Our culture continues to reward hard work within the corporate structure with both monetary and cultural capital while it down plays the importance of time spent at home.

Thomas Kochan (2005) remarks that with the growth of dual earner families there is still a third job - that of keeping up the home to manage. In these homes, the majority of the work still falls on women to manage. Therefore, women do the majority of work in what Hochschild has termed, "the second shift." These are the tasks that are more often

left to women. Hochschild (1996) shows that even when they desire an egalitarian relationship inside the family, women are responsible for more of the household chores and those chores that are done on a daily or weekly basis instead of those chores that are completed more sporadically.

In *Unbending Gender* (2000), Joan Williams looks at the relationship between parenting and working. She suggests that the norm of the “ideal worker” and the norm of the “ideal parent” are placed at opposite sides of the spectrum and one will lose out. This tension leads to a feeling of inadequacy on both ends. When people “choose” to lessen their hours at one task or the other, colleagues and other parents often marginalize them. Williams suggests that we need to rethink both of these ideal versions but that practical and legal changes in the relationship between work and ownership are also needed. Since employers are not likely to provide “family-friendly” environments and people are often unwilling or able to use these resources, the courts must step in to support families. Additionally, she notes that feminism’s focus on power and equality within the family has done a disservice to women in general and feminism should refocus its emphasis on economic justice issues in the greater society that would be more beneficial to all women and to men in the long run.

Kathleen Gerson (2002, 2004) shows that the struggle to be both economically supportive and emotionally supportive does not play out the same way for men and women. Men still struggle to be a good provider for their families and women are still expected to be the caring parent. Similar to Hochschild, Gerson shows that even when both men and women strive for equality in their relationships, economic and personal

concerns constrain equality. Therefore, men revert to a desire for more traditional relationship forms with a male breadwinner and women prefer economic autonomy.

Chores and responsibilities in the home are a second important use of one's time. Often seen as the counterbalance to time at work, men and women must negotiate their time use on household activities, including housework, childcare and personal activities. However, men and women do not experience the same expectations. Those without traditional families may be even more disadvantaged as they do not have clearly defined roles outside of work.

Community Connections

While much of the literature on family and work emphasizes a battle to balance time spent on work with time spent on childcare responsibilities, there is a growing body of research that suggests the debate between time at work and time at home is not just about finding time to do the important work of home but to enjoy other things as well. In their book, *Putting Work in Its Place*, Peter Meiksins and Peter Whalley (2002) show that people want to work but also want to have the opportunity to enjoy their lives outside of work. This study shows that the work/life divide is more than just finding time outside of work to take care of children and elderly parents but it also involves finding time for leisure activities. While children and family obligations provide the incentive for many women to lobby for part-time work or flexible hours, they also use this time to gain control over their work and engage in other life activities.

Similarly, Morten Blekasaune (2005) shows that among Norwegian workers, the time spent on leisure activities helps to compensate for needs that are not met at work.

Previously, people gained personal and social satisfaction at work or with family but as people are more disconnected from family and personal connections, employers require longer hours, and technology separates work activities, people will turn to leisure activities to find necessary social satisfaction. Additionally, people's leisure activities will depend on their at-work activities.

In an analysis of the relationship between work, family and other activities, Patricia Voydanoff (2005) shows that community involvement helps to mediate some of the struggles between work and life. In this way, people who are more connected in their communities will be less likely to bring their work dissatisfaction into their home life, noting "community participation and affective community resources are embedded in a work-community-family interface" (678).

A recent study by Eric Dahlin, Erin Kelly, and Phyllis Moen (2008) acknowledges that work may be part of the larger community arrangements. The authors look at the relationship between work and community and pull together the literature about work and family struggles with the work on social networks. They examine the role that workplaces play in the social lives of adults. The study finds that working adults have stronger relationships at work than in the neighborhood but that family is still a bigger draw. Nonetheless, they contend that community should be more broadly conceptualized to incorporate the workplace as a site of social networks. One of the interesting aspects of this study is that they find men to have stronger ties at work than women suggesting that women have broader networks of friends and men somewhat narrower.

One of the tenets of the Dahlin, Kelly, and Moen study was that work was a new site for social relationships because both men and women are now working and the

workplace has a strong pull for men and women. Today's economy does not provide space and time for community and social interaction because of the increasing "flexibility" in the workplace that is largely employer driven and therefore not responsive to employee needs. With limited control over work and increasing consumerist leisure activities, people are strapped for time and money to engage in many social community activities.

Failing Community

At the same time, researchers like Robert Putnam (1996, 2000), suggest that Americans are spending less time in community organizations and more time "bowling alone" because there is a decline in social capital in society. According to Putnam, this decline in formal community involvement is indicative of a decline in our social cohesion, civic engagement, and care for others.

Nonetheless, if men are working more hours, women are working in greater numbers and still handling most of the home responsibilities, there is less time for outside involvements, particularly formal commitments with set time expectations. Putnam acknowledges that work and busyness may be a cause of the decline in social capital but believes that this only accounts for a small amount of the decline and instead places much of the blame on generational change - an overall decline in "neighborliness", technology - an increase in television viewing, particularly the "wrong" kind of television, and urban and suburban sprawl - more time spent traveling to and from places.

While Putnam recognizes many forms of community involvement - from formal organizations to informal dinners with friends, he idealizes the importance of more formal and longer-term involvements. He notes that some informal involvements, such as dinners

with friends, either at home or in restaurants has also declined in recent years. Putnam's work echoes many researchers of the past who lamented the decline of civic society as modernization progressed.

A concern for how modernization affects social interaction and cohesion has been a theme in sociology since its beginnings with Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all providing analyses of how modern society breaks down social relationships. Newer theorists and researchers look at how the process of individualization and the resulting individualism is responsible for a decline in the quality of human interactions (Bauman 2001; Bellah et. al. 1985). On the other hand, David Riesman (1973) looked at how a move toward other-directed motivations caused over-conforming among the professional and managerial classes in the 1950's.

These researchers are all concerned about the process of a selfish society that does not care for neighbors or family as in the past. That people are not authentic and not authentically connected to one another. This disconnection impacts the ability for our society to care for each other.

Others have suggested that community involvement is merely transforming rather than declining precipitously. Everett Ladd (1999) challenges the work of Putnam and others by showing that community involvement is not declining as much as it is shifting focus. The voluntary associations and organizations that Putnam idealizes were largely the arena of upper-class individuals and the bowling leagues the outlet of blue-collar working class individuals with steady jobs and set hours. Even Putnam himself acknowledges that two areas where involvement has not changed are watching sports and engagement with less commitment heavy organizations, such as the Sierra Club. Ladd looks at other

research that shows a greater growth in this involvement as well as involvement in many decentralized activities. Often times, community is functionally defined by professional relationships rather than spatial arrangements.

Bridging Friendships

The debates over work-family balance and community involvement however neglect another important aspect of social cohesion- friends. Friendship relationships often bridge the gap between family and community as well as work. While family serves to provide economic, emotional and physical support to its members, the role of friendship. Friendship is a social role that has not received the same level of attention as other encounters. In the literature, relationships with friends are seen as either the ideal connection as a chosen interaction or explained away as less important because there is no clear definition of friendship and many friend relationships are short-lived. In describing the historical context of friendship, Helena Lopata (1990) notes these two competing themes in studies of friendship but suggests that friend relationships are more complex, varied, and tied to other social relationships.

However, friend relationships and an understanding of friendship have developed along a similar trajectory to family relationships. As people become more geographically removed from their biological family, friends become more important as a social relationship. With work consuming more of one's time, the place, role, and expectation of friendship has shifted.

Sasha Roseneil (2004) studies friendship in the relationship to a focus on heterosexual marriage and notes that the expectation of a couple-centered life with joint

leisure activities is a construct of the modern age but a broadening of friendship networks and “queering” of relationships are changing those patterns. Friendships are increasingly becoming part of the care network for individuals as well as for families based on the Friendship and Non-Conventional Partnership project in Britain. Rather than looking at the view of a decline in social capital it points toward an acceptance of broader social networks, weak ties, and care among individuals by mutual respect and not obligation.

Friends as Family

Care among individuals and friendship challenging the normal bounds of biolegal family is one of the key components of the work of researchers like, Kath Weston, who study how members of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered, and Queer (GLBTQ) individuals, who are removed from traditional family networks, support one another as families. Within these studies, there is recognition of the power of commitment, economic cooperation, and love. There is an increasing acknowledgement that our society has changed and with it the relationships between people. Unfortunately, the legal acknowledgement of these changes has not followed as quickly. The fight for same-sex marriage will play an important role in how committed relationships between people - homosexual or heterosexual - are managed legally. Meanwhile, as we wait for structural change, people are making individual choices and finding ways of talking about and thinking about partnership.

In *Families We Choose* (1991) Kath Weston shows that gay and lesbian relationships have built families on love and kinship. Often outcast from their own biological kin, gays and lesbians found ways of mutually supporting one another. In turn,

they have acknowledged a large diversity in the definition of family. This acknowledgement is useful, not only for the homosexual population but for people looking to break from the restrictive definitions associated with biological family. This sentiment is seconded by Say and Kowalewski (1998) who look to defining family beyond its functional relationships of caring. Their definition of family is “a committed relationship, developed over time, between persons who participate in each other’s lives emotionally, spiritually, and materially” (5). Weston cautions, however, that these relationships cannot be defined outside the traditional power structures in society. Family has long been seen as a place to reproduce the power arrangements in society and without challenging those notions; the same relationships may come into play within alternative or chosen families. Additionally, “alternative families” will continue to be marginalized. This can be seen in the fact that while the term, “chosen family”, has become synonymous with many alternative family forms; it does not have the legal or political clout of “traditional” or legal families.

This form of intentional family expands beyond the realm of the GLBTQ community. Anna Muraco (2006) shows that many “cross-gender, different sexual orientation friends” also consider themselves family and provide economic as well as emotional support to one another. While Muraco suggests that geographic or emotional disconnection from one’s biolegal family may be the impetus to create fictive kin relationships, the research shows that these relationships hold even for those with more stable biolegal family relations. Nonetheless, there is fluidity in the relationships and concern that if and when the straight partner enters into a traditional family relationship, the support will falter. Muraco notes that “family” is often used because there is limited language to discuss platonic but intimate friendships. A second important dimension of

the research is the way it highlights both normative and transformative gender relationships. It both underlines the gendered expectations of men as providers and women as nurturers as well as the role that heterosexual women have in “traditional families.”

Normative gendered expectations as well as a strong emphasis on the coupling in adulthood are problematic for people who live alone. While Roseneil and others have shown that care and support among are important for individuals, this support is particularly important for people who do not have a clearly defined family relationship. Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) provide evidence that as society becomes more disconnected in formal ways friendship is growing in importance. Additionally, sexual intimacy is less of a marker of support. Their research shows that individuals develop bonds and maintain friendships outside of sexual relationships and often maintain lovers as friends as well as friends as lovers. These relationships provide the support and care that is often reserved for members of one’s family.

Similar extended and non-biolegal relationships are evident in minority families as well. In these families, grandparents and aunts and uncles may take on the responsibility of raising children. Non-kin “aunt” and “uncle” relationships are accepted in a way that is not as noticeable in white middle class families. These arrangements have helped to support families with economic disadvantages (Roschelle 1997; Stack 1974).

While talk about alternative family forms has increased in the last decade, it is not a new phenomenon. In earlier eras, minority families, people on the periphery and unconventional individuals have developed a variety of arrangements to support each other when traditional family structures were not available. In the nineteenth century,

unmarried women lived together in economically and socially supporting households. Termed “Boston marriages” by their inclusion in a Henry James (1956) novel, *The Bostonians*, these were relationships that allowed women to support themselves. It is difficult to determine if these women were lesbians because close relationships with women were accepted at the time as women were presumed to be nonsexual. It is likely that some were and some weren’t. However, many of the women in these partnerships were feminists who were rebelling against the patriarchal nature of marriage (Kennedy 2001).

Friendship as Community

While family-like relationships are part of the discussion of friendship, it is not the role that friendship has in society. One of the things that make friendships difficult to study is the breadth of people that others consider friends. In an attempt to develop the sociology of friendship, Graham Allan (1989) shows that gender as well as social class and social structure have a great impact on friendship relationships. Similar to Lopata, Graham notes that friendship is hard to define and often neglected in the sociological literature or studied as if disconnected from other social relationships. However, by examining the literature, it becomes evident that friendship is closely tied to other social conditions.

Nonetheless, the conventional wisdom relating to friendship is that it is a chosen relationship that can be entered and exited without major social upheaval. Friendships are not expected to provide long-term care. However, recent studies of friendship show that while friendship relationships remain dynamic they are not all equal. The difficulty in

studying friendship is the varying degrees and definitions used by individuals and researchers.

Ray Pahl (2000) notes that friendship is tied to one's social and cultural time and warns against attempting a universal definition of friendship. Rather, Pahl suggests that people have various personal communities that can range from friend-like families where individuals in families are loosely connected to family-like friends where friends meet many of the needs expected of traditional family relationships and a variety of configurations in between. These relationships can provide a strong social bond that holds people together in crisis but they can also be negatively exclusive.

Pahl also notes that women and men see friends differently. Historically, friendship has been the realm of men who met outside the home with others while women cared for the family inside the home. Recently, new investigations have noted that women's friendships are still prevalent but limited by patriarchal family demands. As women have moved into the public sector their relationships have developed. Relationships between women are sometimes seen as more contentious but also more based on relational acceptance where men's relationships are more activity focused. Particularly men in working class backgrounds who spend time in settings such as bars and consider other patrons friends or co-workers even if they do not discuss nor share other social relationships. Nonetheless, friendship in a more disconnected society is not a purely chosen relationship with no expectations or bounds but a basis for social connectedness that takes trust and time to develop.

Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl (2004, 2006) expand on the discussion of friends as personal communities. They interview individuals from all walks of life and develop a

typology of friendship with six different possible groupings that are sometimes centered on friends, sometimes on families, and sometimes on partners or settings. These typologies are friend-like, friend-enveloped, family-like, family-enveloped, partner-based, neighbor-based and professional-based. The first three typologies involve an integration of friends and family and a bridging of chosen and given family roles while the final four general have distinct separations between friends and family. The work of Spencer and Pahl note that friendship is not a quaint chosen relationship that is easily entered into and exited from but rather a complex social network that has implications for other forms of social interaction. Studying personal communities is an important way to look at social capital and family support.

All of these researchers on friendship note that geographic as well as emotional distance from one's biolegal family play a role in the changing relationships between individuals. A focus on place is nothing new. Claude Fischer (1982) focuses his discussion in *To Dwell Among Friends* on how urbanism affects one's social relationships noting that individuals living in urban environments have more non-kin relationships than those living in rural environments. Fischer surmises that urbanism leads to a "plurality of communities".

The "families of choice" discussed by Weston and others were largely tied to GLBT individuals who were estranged from conventional family members. The geographic distance between many family members in today's societies requires that individuals cannot expect social support from biolegal family members but must find support in other venues. Since friendship and chosen family relationships support each other emotionally

and materially, it is important to acknowledge the role they play in community development.

No matter the definition of family, the things these families have in common are an attempt to care for and support each other, economically and socially. The role of care taking is relevant to the development of society. Evelyn Nakano Glen (2000) highlights goals for society in relation to care-taking and many different family forms. Her suggestions are that we should a) acknowledge the social contribution of caring work; b) recognition of those in need of care as full members of society; c) recognize those who do care work as important contributors and remunerate them appropriately. This challenge is important, not only for families and variations of families, but for singles living alone. If we can imagine a society that values care in such a way, it becomes more possible to accept singles living alone as relational members of society both in their ability to give help and need to receive it. The relations are not tied to living arrangements or legal acceptance but to the human-ness of all people. These changes provide a context for acknowledge how the functions of traditional families can be accomplished through a variety of relationships.

Time spent in the community is both seen as an important counterpoint to the struggles to balance work and family but also as a consequence of technological and consumer changes. Nonetheless, friendships whether like family or acquaintances at work are important ways to look at how people find support in society. The time one has to spend with friends is an important aspect of the time that people give to their community as well as negotiate with work and family.

Analyzing Time through the Singles Lens

The economic need to work and the social need for family, friends, and community provide competing demands on people's limited time. The work-family literature has shown that families are often struggling to find the necessary time to provide appropriate social supports. Alternatively, the community literature questions the decline of time spent on civic activities and community involvement. Finally, researchers on friendship suggest that the nuances of friendly relations are complex and sometimes provide similar family supports and elements of community involvement but still require a person's time to manage a variety of relationships.

Within all of these arenas, there is limited discussion of how people who live alone spend their time and balance obligations. Individuals who live alone provide an ideal lens for looking at the competing time demands between work, family, friends and community. Within the arena of work, it is expected that singles can be that ideal worker with commitment only to one's job. Yet, people who live alone have obligations to both extended families and to friends who assume family-like roles. Additionally, people who live alone must manage the household chores that people in traditional families also manage. Finally, community connections and informal relationships often provide those who live alone with the social supports that are not gained through a live-in partner or family. All of these areas put demands on the time of people who live alone in similar and different ways than people in other household arrangements.

People without "traditional" family obligations are still searching for time to enjoy things outside work. Studies of the transformation of marriage and non-marital cohabitation suggest that social organizations outside of marriage and family, such as

commercialized leisure, provide important socialization and advancement opportunities. The time away from work serves an additional function for “non-family” units in order to create supportive social networks and engage in important community activity. It creates social space necessary for building relationships that serve the functions of family includes time for leisure and community activity. What this suggests is that the strategies Meiksins and Whalley delineate - working part-time, contracting, and making domestic arrangements - are relevant to people without traditional family arrangements and people within traditional families (2002).

Additionally, the structural constraints that inhibit a move toward fewer work hours are also important to investigate. These constraints include lowered income, fewer benefits, limited career applicability, and a gender bias toward women. These economic impediments toward more flexibility within a career are heightened for the population of singles living alone. Without shared home resources, income and benefits from a partner are not available. With more men living alone during their lives, they may be less likely to develop strategies for reduced work hours. Therefore, single men and women may have different relationships with the time spent at work and time at home. As the population of single men, living alone, increases at a greater rate than single women, this is an important aspect of the population of single adults that needs more examination.

Researchers show that when and how much people work is determined in large part by one’s occupational status (Jacobs and Gerson 2004; Presser 2003). This research shows that workers in professional careers with higher levels of education work more hours and those with less education struggle to find enough hours to support themselves and families and work more non-standard hours. Additionally, those workers with less

control over their work time and more non-standard work hours are more likely to be minorities and women. The differences in how men and women spend their time both during work and away from work as shown by researchers (Bianchi, et al. 2000; Hochschild 1997; Hochschild 1989) are of importance to the study of single person households. Women continue to do more of the “family” building and maintenance among partnered couples and gender impacts what work people do both paid and unpaid and how these gender differences manifest themselves in single person households can underline important gender relationships. Milkie and Peltola (1999) show that men and women in married couples experience their balance of time differently and the investigations of these differences in single-person households will highlight those differences that are different.

Finally, the family literature shows that unmarried individuals are more likely to spend time with extended family and in community than those in married couples - the greedy family theory. Studying single person households helps to examine these theories because as people living alone - whether in relationships or not - are responsible for all housework and “kin work”, must pay for all bills on their own, and are explicitly not part of “greedy marriages.” Therefore, studying this group allows me to see if these theories hold true without the draw or balance from other people in the household to complete the tasks of a couple, even if one is in a couple.

The area of the time use of singles, living alone is a little studied area in the sociology of family and work. While there are studies that do minor comparisons between the time use of singles and married individuals (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Abraham, Maitland, and Bianchi 2006), these studies focus predominantly on the differences in

married couples' use of time and treat singles as an undifferentiated group. Singles are not an undifferentiated group, however: and it is important to study how different groups of singles make sense of their time.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The focus of the research on work-life balance has predominantly concentrated on how married and partnered individuals use their time in relation to each other and how parents manage their limited time with childcare and other responsibilities. While there are studies that do minor comparisons between the time use of singles and married individuals (Abraham, Maitland, and Bianchi 2006; Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Presser 2003), these studies principally focus on the differences in married couples' use of time. Singles are used as a comparison category without investigating the differences in their use of time.

This study builds on previous studies to determine how single person households spend their time and examine what differences in time use mean to those living alone. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, I engaged the question of how balance can be achieved by individuals living alone. People in single person households are responsible for their own livelihood and household maintenance but also for their own well-being and connections with others. The study examined the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) to determine if differences in time use exist between single person households and other household constellations. The analysis also included interviews with individuals who live alone to deepen the understanding of how people living alone deal with the time differences uncovered by the quantitative analysis.

Quantitative Data: American Time Use Survey

The ATUS is a continuous large-scale statistical survey administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics¹. Started in 2003, ATUS is an attempt to get a better understanding of the unpaid work, family life, and social life of Americans. Through a follow-up with respondents to the Current Population Survey, ATUS measures the activities of a representative sample of non-institutionalized individuals, fifteen and older, in households throughout the US. This information is connected to demographic data on respondents' age, gender, race, region, living situation, marital status, and occupation. Therefore, it is possible to analyze the time use of various population groups

Respondents provide a high level of detail in their daily activities and these responses are coded into a three-tiered categorical system, which allows for a variety of levels of analyses. Bianchi et al (2006) notes, that using time use surveys are helpful in analyzing the use of time outside of paid work because the survey asks respondents to recall their entire day in sequence and not attempt to make estimates of how much time was spent on various types of activities.

Using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI), the chosen respondents are asked to recall their activities for 24 hours beginning at 4 a.m. on the previous day. The ATUS sample is drawn from respondents to the Current Population Survey (CPS) and can be matched to CPS data when necessary. There was a two to six month delay between the final CPS interview and the ATUS interview; to ensure accuracy data is drawn from ATUS whenever possible.

¹ More information on the American Time Use Survey can be found at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website (www.bls.gov).

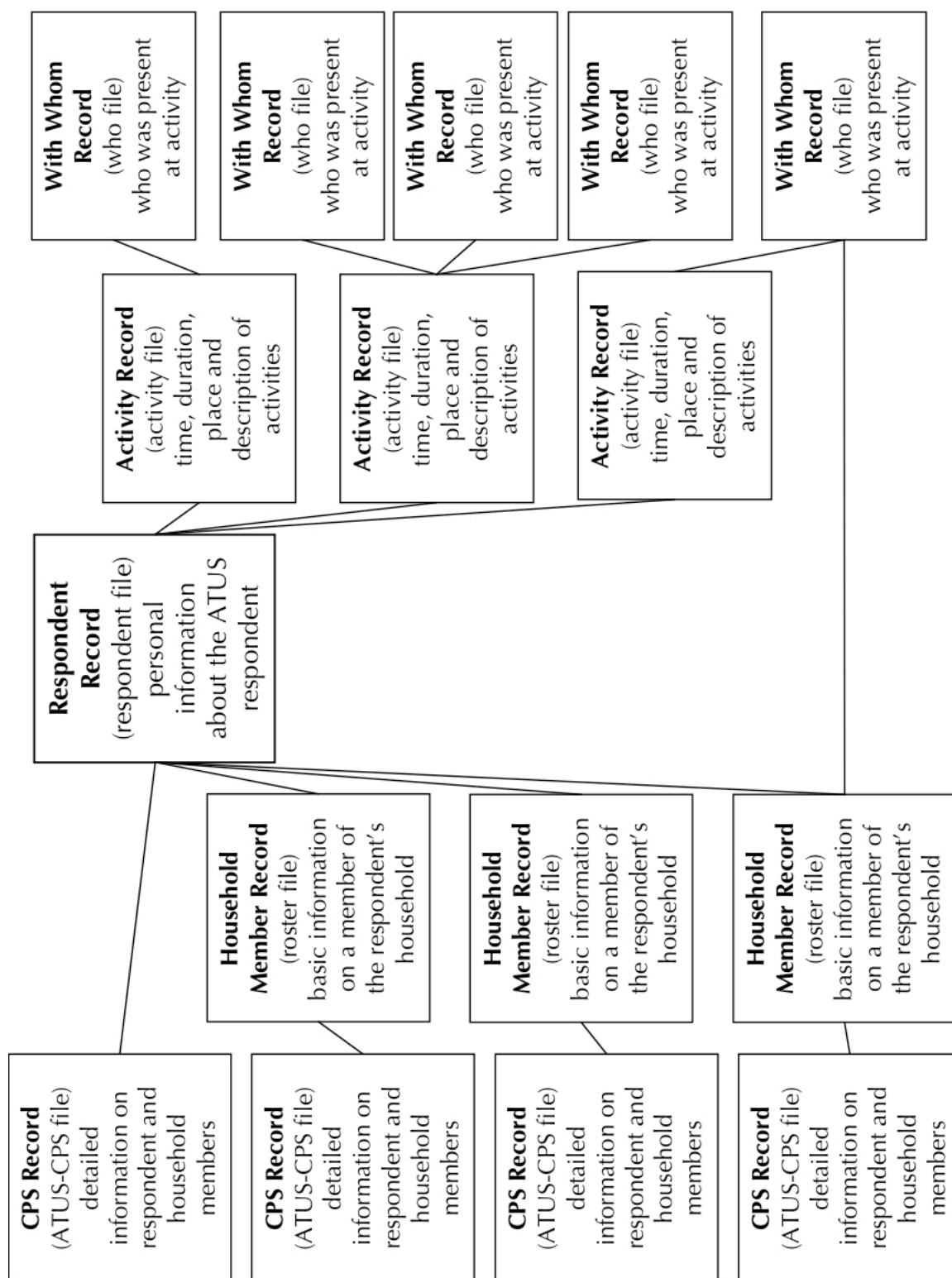
The survey asks that individuals respond to what they were doing, where, and who was present throughout the time frame in question. Respondents are not asked who was present while sleeping, grooming, working, or personal activities. While individuals may be with others during that time, for this study it is assumed that they are alone. To ensure that time is measured as comprehensively as possible, the ATUS diary days are distributed across days of the week, with 10 percent allotted to each of the weekdays, Monday through Friday, 25 percent to Saturdays and 25 percent to Sundays, and distributed evenly across the weeks of the year. The response rate is similar to that of other time diary surveys and error from non-response is estimated to be negligible (Abraham, Maitland, and Bianchi 2006).

Time diary surveys are an attempt to both give people freedom in defining their activities and make the data usable to analysts and comparable to international time use systems. Respondents provide a high level of detail in their daily activities and these responses are coded into a three tier categorical system. This allows for a variety of levels of analyses. This is helpful when looking at a person's workday that is intertwined with social activities, such as lunch or socializing with co-workers. These activities are coded as specific individual activities in the second tier but fall into the larger group of work-related activities.

Preparing the Data

In the ATUS data, there are multiple data files that contain necessary information for this analysis. The respondent file contains information about each person who

Figure 1: Map of Connections between ATUS Data Files



responded to the survey, the roster file contained information about the members of the respondent's household. The CPS file contained more specific information about the respondent and his or her household members. The activity file contained information about each of the activities of the respondent. The "who file" contains information about people present during each of the activities. Therefore, there are multiple records for each of the respondents to the survey and each piece of data contained linking variables that allowed one to match the respondent and case with the correct information. Figure 1 provides a map of the connections between the various data files. Each respondent has an individual record that can be linked to detailed information from their CPS interview as well as information about each of the respondent's household members, which are linked to specific CPS data. Then there are multiple activity records for each respondent and multiple records of who was present for each activity.

To complete the analysis, all of this information needed to be collapsed into one record for each respondent. The first step in the process involved determining whether an individual lived alone, with other adults only, with other adults and children, or with children only. Since there is no specific variable identifying household type, I used the household roster file to classify each member of the household as respondent, adult, or child. Respondents could be any non-institutionalized individual age 15 and older so it was necessary to also make clear whether the respondent was an adult or child. Once the household members were identified, I was able to create a variable for each

respondent that classified each as a single person household, multiple adult household, multiple adults with children household, or single adult with children household².

Since I am interested in with whom the respondent's are spending their time, it was then necessary to categorize each activity according to who was present. The possibilities for who someone could complete an activity with range from alone to unmarried partners, members of one's family in the home, members of one's family not living in the home, other unrelated household members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. As each activity could have been completed with more than one person but it would be difficult to aggregate the activities to each possible participant, I simplified the categories to alone if the respondent was alone or with whom is unknown, family if the respondent was with a member of their family living in the home, including children, spouse or partner, brothers and sisters, parents or others. This category also includes children under the age of 18 who do not live in the home. A third category is extended family, which includes family members, including children over 18 and parents who do not live in the home, and other relatives. A final category is other who are friends, co-workers, and neighbors as well as boarders and roomers that do live in the home but are not considered roommates or housemates.

For each activity, I noted who was with the respondent during the activity. Therefore, activities are categorized by whether they are an alone activity, a family activity, an extended family activity, or an activity with others. In instances where there was a family member and an extended family member present, I categorized it as a multi-family

² Non-custodial parents are identified as single person households as the CPS and ATUS data classifies their activities as those with non-household children and there is no way to know how the time is arranged between parents.

activity. When there is a family member, an extended family member, and someone else present, I categorized it as a family and other activity.

Appendix A provides a list of all the possible with whom categories and how each was classified. To make the file workable, each activity was given a notation as to whether the activity was completed alone, with household members, with non-household family members, with other individuals or with a combination of household members, non-household family members, and/or others. Once this notation was connected to the activities, I was able to eliminate the duplicate activity information and with whom records.

Aggregating Activities

After each activity was classified according to the members present, it was then necessary to collapse the activities to the level of individual respondent so I could tell how much time each respondent spent at an activity with family, extended family, etc. To do this, I aggregated the amount of time spent for different activities based on type of activity and in some cases who was present. In addition to noting the type of activity and who was present it was sometimes necessary to aggregate numerous instances of the same type of activities. This list is incredibly comprehensive and activities can be aggregated to broad categories, such as “socializing, relaxing, and leisure” or narrow activities, such as “listening to the radio”.

I was interested in some of the differences in activities, such as leisure, and who was involved in the activity so I used a strategy of aggregating some activities to the broad level and others to the more specific example based on who was present. For activities

that are relatively similar across individuals no matter who is present, such as sleep, personal care, household work, and paid work, I calculated how much time was spent at the activity during that day with no indication of who was present. For social and care activities, I computed the time spent on each activity based on who was present. I was also interested in the empirical relationship between some “leisure activities” and my other categories. Liana Sayer (2001) has defined categories of leisure, such as community leisure, family leisure, sports leisure but I wondered if spending time at sporting events with co-workers, friends, family, or neighbors would be seen as different types of activities. For this reason, I undertook a brief empirical investigation of how different activities fit together in the data by completing a factor analysis using the variable “with whom”. However, the factor analysis was unsuccessful because it represents a Heywood case, which means that there are too many or too few communalities. Since the factor analysis ultimately proved unhelpful, I devised an aggregation system that used the focus of the activity on household activities and external activities combined with who was present. For example, social activities that happened outside of the home were directly connected to time with others but watching television alone or with household members were counted as household leisure and watching televisions with people outside of one’s home was counted as leisure with others. Appendix B contains a list of all the possible activities and how they were classified.

The number of minutes spent on each activity, from zero to 1440 was then associated with each individual respondent. To ensure that each activity was counted but was not counted in more than one category, I calculated the total amount of time spent during the day to ensure that each respondent’s day totaled of 1440 minutes, or 24 hours

as a check to the calculations. Then duplicate respondent information and multiple activity records were deleted.

Narrowing the Sample

Once the time spent on various activities was aggregated to the level of the respondent, I was able to establish the sample for my study. My analysis looked at individuals within households and within that single adults living alone comprise about 14 percent of the population since people in household with multiple adults are counted individually and not as members of a multiple adult household. The sample for this study is a pooling of respondents from the 2005-2007 ATUS data. The total sample contains 38,229 individuals, 12,248 from 2007, 12,943 from 2006, and 13,038 from 2005. The ATUS over samples individuals in minority groups and people with children to complexity within the sample. Therefore sampling weights are necessary to provide a representative estimate of the total population. Once the weights are applied, it is estimated that in the overall population, single person households account for about 14.03 percent of the population with multiple adults, coupled parents, and single parents accounting for 43.78, 38.36, and 3.83 percent, respectively. Table 1 shows the estimated population breakdown of the overall population as well as a breakdown of population demographics based on household types.

I worked from the assumption that the majority of people living alone are over age 65 since by that age most people are done with their child rearing responsibilities, many are widowed, and many of those who are divorced have not remarried. As the data shows, 35 percent of individuals living alone are 65 and older, which is 13 percent higher than

coupled adults and 34 percent higher than both household types with children. On the other end of the spectrum, 26 to 33 percent of the individuals interviewed were from households with children are younger than 25 but comprise only five percent of people living alone.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Individuals, ages 15-85, in 4 Household Types (percent)*					
	Single Adults (8,876).	Coupled Adults (10,279).	Coupled Parents (16,271).	Single Parents (2,803).	Total (38,229).
Household Type					
Population	14.03	43.78	38.36	3.83	100.00
Age					
15-24 Years	5.12	13.62	25.58	31.65	17.70
25-64 Years	59.87	64.04	72.98	67.35	67.02
65 and Older	35.01	22.34	1.44	1.00	15.28
Gender					
Women	54.68	49.00	50.97	75.73	51.57
Men	45.32	50.00	49.03	24.27	48.43
*Percents weighted; sample size is not.					

Since people age 65 and over and those under the age of 25 are less likely to be in the labor force full time during the ATUS interview, the quantitative sample is limited to individuals between the ages of 25 and 64. This provides better comparison opportunities across households as it gives insight into the similarities and differences for those with more settled life experiences as well as those with significant family responsibilities. The final sample involves 5,131 single adults; 6,682 coupled adults; 13,155 coupled parents; and 2,185 single parents. The weighted estimates show that for the population of individuals, aged 25 to 64, single adults account for 12.54 percent of the population with

coupled adults, coupled parents, and single parents accounting for 41.85, 41.78, and 3.84 percent respectively.

Qualitative Data: In-depth Interviews

While the ATUS data was useful in determining overall trends and making comparisons between groups, this data set is a generalized account of how people spend their time with little discussion of what it means to people's everyday lives. It does not, however, give an understanding of how individuals experience their choices and constraints in the use of time. Many researchers have noted the role that the interaction in qualitative research helps researchers and subjects make sense of the meaning of events and ideas (Creswell 1994; Krauss 2005). To provide an in-depth understanding of how different people understand their use of time and constraints placed on time use, I undertook 22 intensive personal interviews with individuals who live alone. In a study of this sort, it is unfeasible to complete a large interview sample with representatives from all the possible groupings. Yet, Cannon, Higginbotham, and Leung (1988) note that a homogenous group of participants in a small sample provide a more substantial amount of data to establish trends but it is also important not to unintentionally exclude an important identity group. Therefore, I established categories that I felt were important to include in the interviews and completed purposive snowball sampling to meet those criteria.

Interview Sampling and Recruitment

To look closely at those in the middle of their careers and family-building years, the qualitative interview portion of the study limits the sample to individuals, ages 28-50. This

helps provide some comparison to coupled and parenting adults in the “family-creation” portion of their lives as well as those with more settled life experiences. I expressly focused on finding men and women throughout that age range and individuals in different occupations and work schedules. Noting the importance of one’s work environment on an individual’s time at work and, consequently, one’s time in other activities. Additionally, I am cognizant of the concerns of racial bias in qualitative interview studies (Cannon et al. 1988) and purposively choose a diverse group of interviewees to ensure that I am hearing from voices outside of the white middle class. I also sought out lesbians and gay men to provide an understanding of how individuals from a community that is not readily able to engage in traditional marriage but also has a history and culture that supports non-traditional family relationships and singles. These interview groups provide information both on the similarities among women and among men as well as the similarities and differences between occupational classes. The interviews were designed to learn stories from people but not to serve as purely representative of the groups themselves.

Recruiting participants took place in a number of ways. I began recruitment of interview participants through purposive snowball sampling. My first interviews were friends of friends who were willing to participate. I then found more interviews through the original participants. While I began my interview sampling through my own social networks, I also needed to look for participants outside of my interpersonal relationships, particularly in relation to occupational class. In this case, I developed an advertisement and provided a small incentive³. These advertisements were then posted in appropriate

³ Appendix C includes the recruitment materials approved by the Institutional Review Board at Loyola University Chicago.

work environments, such as fast-food restaurants, big box retail stores, local restaurants, and telemarketing organizations. I also posted flyers in churches, laundromats, coffee shops and other public places where individuals living alone may frequent. These strategies were not completely successful as noted in the next section but these practices ensured that I got a diverse sample for my interviews. Table 2 provides a list of the interviewees and their self-identification on important demographic and workforce characteristics.

Problems in Recruitment

There were a few difficulties in arranging interviews. It was easy for me to find participants who were professional women in their mid- to late- 30's because that is my age group and I had many friends of friends interested in the study. In fact, I eventually turned down a few interview offers at the end of the study. I had more difficulty finding professional men but again, friends of friends knew some people and a little push revealed more. I made an effort to get as far removed from my friends to ensure a greater diversity of participants and that lead to a wealth of female participants from a variety of professions. Finding participants from hourly wage jobs was more difficult. Initially, I talked to friends in retail positions but those conversations yielded no responses because they did not know of people who could afford to live alone. As noted earlier, I posted flyers at places where people living alone spent time. I also contacted representatives of unions, such as SEIU and AFSCME, as well as activist organizations, such as Jobs with Justice to gain contact with people working in retail and service jobs. A concern with using these networks is finding interviewees who have more social supports than those

Table 2: List of Interviewees with Self-Identified Demographic Characteristics*

Name	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	WF Type	Shift	Orientation	Education
Amanda	35	Female	White	Consultant	Regular	Straight	B.A.
Becca	31	Female	White	Salaried	Regular	Straight	B.A.
Bob	47	Male	Caucasian	Hourly	Regular	Celibate	B.A.
Brian	31	Male	White	Salaried	Regular	Heterosexual	B.A.
Dee	30	Female	African American	Salaried	Regular	Heterosexual	M.A.
Gina	34	Female	White/Jewish	Salaried	Regular	Straight	J.D.
Jack	31	Male	White	Hourly	Swing	Straight	B.A.
James	30	Male	Black American	Salaried	Regular	Heterosexual	M.S.
Jolene	43	Female	White	Hourly	Regular	Straight	B.A.
Kelli	35	Female	White	Self-Employed	Varied	Heterosexual	B.A.
Lisa	28	Female	White/Jewish	Hourly	Swing	Lesbian	M.A.
Margaret	41	Female	Philipino/Sicilian	Hourly	Regular	Straight	some college
Mary	40	Female	White	Consultant	Regular	Straight	M.A.
Mia	33	Female	Black/White	Salaried	Regular	Straight	M.S.W.
Monique	28	Female	Caucasian/Mexican	Salaried	Regular/ Swing	Straight	some college
Rick	48	Male	White	Hourly	Graveyard	Gay	M.S.
Sophia	48	Female	White	Hourly	Swing/ Graveyard	Celibate	some college
Steve	50	Male	White	Salaried	Regular/ Swing	Gay	M.A.
Taylor	32	Male	White	Salaried	Regular	Straight	B.A.
Thad	28	Male	White	Salaried	Regular	Straight	M.A.
Tom	37	Male	White	Salaried	Regular	Straight	M.A.
William	38	Male	White	Consultant	Regular	Straight	Ph.D.

*Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality

struggling outside of organized networks. Yet, there was still limited response from my efforts. Future studies will want to complete more representative interviews of these populations to get a more nuanced comparison between groups experiences.

Interview Procedures

Interviews lasted between one and two hours and covered topics ranging from participants' experiences living alone as well as their involvement in paid work, community work, and their social lives. These questions focused on their relationship with other family members as well as the community. I also asked questions about their work experiences as these will help uncover work-life balance issues. While I will have a general interview schedule, the interviews were open-ended to allow me to fully explore the work-life balance of individuals⁴. Interviewees were from four urban areas in the Midwest and East. Most of the interviews took place in person at coffee shops and restaurants with one telephone interview when a suitable time and location was unworkable. The interviews were audio taped to provide clear and detailed transcripts.

This kind of in-depth, conversational interviewing created richly detailed responses unattainable with survey research methods because of the personal connection and opportunities for elaboration and clarification (Weiss 1995). For example, I learned that some work environments provided, even encouraged, socializing during the work hours while others had prohibitions or structural impediments to much social interaction at work. The interviews helped to understand how individuals make sense of their work environment with regard to personal relationships. These in-depth interviews helped to tell

⁴ See Appendix D for General Interview Schedule.

the story of how single adults, living alone make sense of their lives in relation to work and life, with a focus on how gender and occupational class affect the use of time.

Mixed Methodology Rationale

Mixed methods provided two strong ways of analyzing data relevant to single people living alone: quantitative analysis of actual time spent for a representative sample of the population with the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) and qualitative interviews with a small sample of individuals who live alone. Discussion on mixed methods research suggests that integrating qualitative and quantitative data analysis not only provide breadth and depth to the research topic but also illuminate each portion of the data (Bryman 2007). I took the methodological approach that utilized multiple methods of inquiry and actively integrated the finding from these distinct strands of research. Morgan (2007) notes that this pragmatic approach to research, which involves integrating the research design and analysis of both methods and not treating them as purely separate components, reinforces the strengths of mixed methodology by an emphasis on the connection between epistemology and technique. I focused on both the design of each method of research as well as a purposeful integration of both. This pragmatic approach takes a practical look at the available data and rather than assuming pure objectivity or complete subjectivity it asks how one can get the most from the available data, speak to the research questions most clearly, and communicate across methodological lines.

To engage the question of individuals living alone, I felt it important to situate individuals living alone within a larger understanding of societal time use. I looked at the context of the lives of single person households by using the ATUS, a large-scale,

quantitative data set, to locate single people in relation to other households and in relation to one another based on the important identity groupings. This helped to clarify how individuals living alone spend their time differently than individuals who live with others.

However, the quantitative data only told part of the story. It does not examine the meaning and importance that people who live alone give to their time use. Our everyday reality is created and recreated through interactions with institutional actors and other people (Berger and Luckmann 1967). These interactions both define how individuals see themselves and how they relate to one another. Therefore, the importance of the interactions of people living alone defines and controls the way the world is viewed by them and others. For this reason, I also completed qualitative interviews to provide a deeper understanding of how people who live alone feel and think about their own experiences. These two methods work together to provide a story about the ways that gender and occupational class impact individuals and groups.

Good mixed method studies are not two separate studies combined in one larger study. They integrate the process of both methods and use the findings from both to engage the deeper issues underlying the phenomena. While the quantitative and qualitative components of this research plan were completed separately from each other, I believe that a stronger story is told when methods are combined. The participants in both the quantitative and qualitative components are different but they are demographically similar and can provide insight into the overall picture. Therefore, I will use each method to both reinforce the other and to challenge assumptions and questions asked.

Proponents of mixed methods research identify the following strategies for mixed methods research by the order of data collection and the emphasis placed on each type of

data and analysis (Creswell 2003). The ATUS was previously collected and it is impossible to follow up with participants. Therefore, the quantitative section comes first in my study. However, I see both data analyses as equally important to the study. In the qualitative data collection, I used questions and topics from the quantitative data to formulate my initial questions in the qualitative interviews. Similarly, I use ideas and issues gathered from the qualitative interviews to then reanalyze data in the quantitative findings.

This method allowed for a rich interaction between the two types of data. For example, after completing a number of interviews, I started to understand that the lives of individuals living alone were actively creating their lives as independent individuals while still maintaining connections with friends and family. They were attempting to negotiate their own time with the time of many others – friends, family, and employers (see Chapter 6). This helped to clarify how best to aggregate the quantitative data to examine time spent with other people and in outside activities (see Chapter 4). Additionally, the interviews with people living alone helped me understand what was going on with the time use patterns established. In the other direction, the analysis of the quantitative data showed that people living alone spent considerably more time in leisure type activities with people outside their home and I was able to ask questions to more effectively understand the processes. The mixed methods strategy was helpful in understanding both types of data with more depth than either would alone.

For the analysis portion of the study, I emphasized on segment of the data in each chapter to fully focus on the data at hand. However, I also note where and how the findings support each other. The analysis begins with the broad context of adults living

alone and narrows to the experience specific individuals living alone. I believe this method allows for a strong understanding of the lives of people living alone.

Identifying Categories

One of the difficulties in this study is deciding what categories were important in the examination of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of time use among individuals living alone. Categorization is problematic on its own but necessary in providing insight into the differences and similarities among individuals who live alone. With narrowly demarcated categories in the ATUS data and broadly envisioned groups for interviews, I wanted to focus on identity and workforce characteristics that would be suitable for both parts of the study. Bowker and Star (1999) detail how classification systems define marginality through outlining who is the “other”. By allowing flexibility in a system of classification, providing space to identify as “other”, and keeping the voices of the classifiers and those classified, these systems can be useful in distinguishing when lines of demarcation are useful. This became particularly evident when working with the qualitative portion of the study as people living alone did not identify clearly as single or feel relationally isolated. As a mixed methods study, the variables were operationalized in slightly different manners. The quantitative data uses strict categorizations that are tied to the American Time Use Survey and coming from the Current Population Survey and U.S. Census Bureau data. For the qualitative portion of the data, I largely allowed interviewees to define themselves in the interview and on a demographic half sheet given after the interview. These questions about work shift and work type, age gender, race, and sexual orientation inform my interviews (see Table 2).

Defining Singleness

The most important category was the definition of what it means to be a single adult living alone. This is a U.S. Census category that defines people based purely on living arrangements. By focusing attention on people living alone, I am not looking at one's relationship status but one's living arrangements. In fact, a few of the people interviewed were indeed in intimate relationships and everyone had many social relationships. Nonetheless, these individuals are considered non-family households in the Census materials and clearly marginalized in that population. These categories are "loosely coupled" classifications that can change over time (Bowker and Starr 1999). Living arrangements are not inherent in someone's identity but a fluid category that is most important for the purposes of analysis. Although single person households are a category in the U.S. Census data, single person households were not easily identified in the ATUS data and a variable had to be constructed to identify those individuals. The addition of this variable allowed me to both remove the single person households from the data to examine them more closely and also compare the time use of single person households to the average time use of other households.

The fluidity of understanding in what is meant to be single is evident in participants' understanding of their own status. This was evident in my solicitation for interview participants. On more than one occasion, possible participants would often tell me about their role as single adults but when asked about their living situation it became clear that they had roommates. In other instances, individuals asked me if they would still be appropriate candidates because they had a partner at the time or were divorced. Still others assumed that I was looking for single parents because of my interest in work-life

balance and singles. It was necessary then to note that while single parents struggle to find balance that their children provide different constraints and different opportunities on time than people who live alone. The classification as “single” carries with it many different connotations and therefore, it was necessary to clearly define living alone as the important category rather than single while at the same time note that I am talking about people who fall outside the mainstream focus on marriage.

From a qualitative point of view, I only interviewed people who lived alone. I was not interested in their relationship status but their living arrangements and made that clear through the recruitment and selection process. Nonetheless, as the qualitative data was analyzed, it became clear that even when not living together, relationship status impacts one’s use of time in ways similar to those with live-in partners although differences were also apparent, most notably in economic arrangements and household maintenance.

Demographic Characteristics

In completing the quantitative portion of the study it was necessary to first determine if living alone mattered in the use of time but then also examine if other demographic factors were important. Categories that served as reference points within the quantitative data were an individual’s age, sex, race and ethnicity, household family income and education. These are all characteristics that have been shown to impact one’s use of time. I used female as the comparison category and examined if men used their time differently than women. For age, the population was limited to individuals between 25 and 64 because these ages capture the majority of working age adults who are also in the family building phase of life. I utilized the variable for specific age rather than the

grouped ages because it shows the differences between individuals rather than groups.

Race and ethnicity was broken into three categories, White, Black, and Hispanic with white serving as the reference group so the analysis examined if there were differences in the time use of Black and Hispanic individuals.

In addition to gender, age, and race, I wondered if income and education provided insight into one's use of time. Education was broken into four categories, no high school diploma, high school diploma only, college degree (this includes Associate's and technical degrees), and advanced degrees (or anyone with a Master's degree or higher). Income is a notation of the household family income so it captures the income of working spouses and partners in coupled households. Around 12 percent of all individuals declined to report household income or did not know it at the time of the interview. The income category is split into six additional categories that range from under \$10,000 per year to \$100,000 and over. These categories provide a chance to look at whether these demographic categories help predict the time use of individuals. They give a sense of the role that gender, age, race, and class have on one's time in the quantitative data.

For the qualitative analysis, it would have been prohibitive to attempt all these categories; therefore I limited the scope of the study to look at the role that age plays in an individual's life course. While there is no clear definition of adulthood but some of the markers on the way are moving out of your parent's house, going to school and/or getting a job, getting married, having kids, buying a house. In examining adults, I wanted to look at how people who's peers would have largely completed the other steps toward adulthood. In this case, those between the ages of 28-50 have become adults but not met all the externally assumed markers or, in the case of those divorce, moved away from them.

Demographically, I focused my interview selection on gender and age and intentionally recruited a relatively equal selection of men and women as well as across the age range.

While my main focus in selecting interviewees was to focus on gender and age, I also felt that it was important to hear from individuals of color and people in the GLBTQ community. Since research has shown that communities of color are more supportive of non-family kin relationships and the gay and lesbian community is on the front lines of creating families of choice, these individuals could provide some comparison for white and/or heterosexual individuals as well as ensure that the study was somewhat inclusive. I was able to interview six people in these categories. I did not interview any Hispanic individuals although, in hindsight, that seems to be an important characteristic in time use and should be examined in the future.

Workforce Characteristics

The hardest category to define was class. I knew that I wanted to get a sense of the class differences of time use in single person households because I believe there are important differences in time based on the constraints of class. However, defining those differences proves problematic. However, since I am looking at time, it is important that one of the defining class differences was a control over one's time. I broke down the class differences as a level of autonomy in one's work and flexibility in the use of time - both the time of work and the tasks in work. The marker that I operated under were positions where one could miss a day of work to stay home and wait for the plumber without concern for one's livelihood versus those where a missed day would put their jobs at risk

or cause a loss of income. While not always the case, the breakdown is largely salaried versus hourly jobs or professional or managerial careers versus retail or service positions.

I utilized a couple of strategies to operationalize the class variable in the ATUS data. First, I separated people by hourly versus salaried positions and used this as a category of work. Secondly, I based my categories on those set by Harriet Presser and others. This looks at work based on the major industry. Using the major industry variable in the ATUS, I used individuals in professional or managerial positions as the baseline and looked at whether working in service, office, or farming and construction positions changed one's use of time.

Additionally, it was useful to look at whether one worked a regular shift or during the evening and overnight. There is not specific variable to identify work shift within the ATUS data so I followed the lead of other time use researchers to create a shift work and graveyard shift variable (Drago and Lee 2008). The shift work variable captured individuals who did not report any work during the middle of the day but did report work in the late afternoon and early evening hours from 4pm-midnight. The graveyard shift variable included individuals who reported work during the overnight hours of midnight to 8am. These variables proved very useful in the analysis.

For the qualitative interviews, narrowing the categories of work was more complicated. I looked at careers that carry with them a large degree of autonomy and flexibility - professional and managerial jobs - and those jobs with limited autonomy during the workday and flexibility in work hours - retail and service jobs. However, there are many jobs that don't neatly fit into those groups. There are many jobs that fall in between those extremes but this limitation allows me to look at those on the ends of the

flexibility spectrum. It is not to say that all professionals have flexibility in their jobs but as professionals they have some control and autonomy over their work and time that is not available to the majority of those in retail and service jobs.

However, as I began the interviews, I realized that the problems extended to an individual's understanding of his or her position. In my recruitment materials, I noted that I was looking for professionals living alone and then also for those in hourly wage positions. One of my interviewees came to me as a professional worker in the purchasing department of a major law firm. It wasn't until later in the interview that it became clear she was paid hourly. Nonetheless, she had a large amount of autonomy and flexibility in her position. Therefore, she does not fit neatly into either category. These difficulties show the arbitrariness of the hourly wage category for occupational class. It also supports the mixed methodological approach as it gives a better understanding of why we can not clearly define occupations based on categories like hourly or non-hourly wage when it comes to control over time.

I also had trouble gaining access to people in very restricted retail and service positions. Ultimately, I focused my recruitment on finding interviewees from a variety of occupations with varying work hours and control over their work environment. In the end, I gained quite a bit of variability in types of positions although would have liked to interview more interviewees in retail and service positions. Also, because working an evening or graveyard shift proved so quantitatively important, more representatives in these positions might be helpful. I did however; interview a few people working outside of the standard shifts. These interviewees were helpful in recognizing the constraints that working a non-standard shift has on one's activities with others.

Dependent Variables

Utilizing the individual respondent information discussed earlier, I created measures of time that coincided with questions regarding time at home, at work, and with others. These measures included work time; sleeping; personal care; household work; consumer services; household family care; dining alone, with household members, or with others; leisure time alone, with household members, or with others; social time; and community care time. These measures were analyzed separately to provide descriptive context. These groupings allowed for comparisons between time with household family in coupled and parenting households with time alone in single person households. It also allowed for comparisons between the time individuals spend with others dependent on household type.

Once a better understanding of average time use was determined through the descriptive statistics, I aggregated them into larger time use groups – namely, paid work time, household maintenance time, household leisure time, and time with others – which served as dependent variables in the regression analyses.

Quantitative Analysis – What Matters

The quantitative analysis was intended to both provide a context for understanding how individuals living alone spend their time as well as provided statistical evidence of the differences between and among people living alone. To better understand what characteristics and categories matter in the use of time for people living alone, I completed both descriptive and predictive analyses of time use that provided comparisons with others. I used, Stata, a quantitative analysis package that allows advanced statistical

analysis of complex data sets like ATUS. The program permitted the easy transformation and analysis of the data and also provided simple ways to reproduce and document techniques. Stata includes both allows you to save a log of your daily activity and write a program, called a “.do” file that can be edited and re-run on multiple occasions. The log files saved me on a number of occasions when I forgot to record the outcome. Additionally, I was able to make adjustments along the way using the “.do” files.

Descriptive Differences

To gain a better understanding of the context within which individuals living alone exist, I used the ATUS data to compare demographic and workforce characteristics of single adults compared to coupled adults, coupled parents, and single parents. This analysis is used to provide a better understanding of how individuals living alone fit with larger society. I then provide the mean times that individuals living alone and others spend on the various measures of time – work, household and personal care, dining and leisure, social, and community care work. These mean times provide a basis for looking at the general distinctions in time use. As time use is inherently different between on work days and weekends, I used a variable indicating the day for which the information was collected to split time into weekdays and weekend or holidays. While time in each activity is measured in minutes, I transformed the time use into hours and minutes for ease of understanding.

Regression Analysis

The descriptive portion of the study provides a comparison of time use among different household groups as well as an understanding of how individuals living alone fit in the larger U.S. society but they do not provide any statistical evidence of the significance of these differences. Therefore, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was undertaken to determine the association between time use and demographic and workforce characteristics⁵. Rather than focusing on the time use in four categories or living situation, the analysis establishes when and if individuals in single person household are different than individuals in other household groups. The demographic characteristics of age, sex, education, race, ethnicity, and household income as well as workforce characteristics of industry, shift, and workforce status are used as additional independent characteristics. Also, the multiple categories of time use that helped provide context are aggregated to four broader time categories for the regression. These categories, paid work, household maintenance, household leisure, and social leisure help to capture the differences between individuals in single person households and others. Since these activity groupings are large and include many subgroups of time, they do not provide large R^2 outcomes suggesting that while these analyses show significance of variables the variables cannot be shown to account for a large amount of the variation in time use. In discussing this phenomenon with other time use researchers, it is difficult to predict time use and small R^2 results are common (Wight 2008). Some economists also depending on

⁵ Some researchers in time use recommend using tobit or negative binomial regression analyses because OLS regression may be inaccurate for variables with zero values. However, many time use researchers show that tobit and negative binomial results are generally similar and I opted to only use OLS regression for ease of interpretation (Drago and Lee 2008; Wight, Raley, and Bianchi 2008).

the question, issues of theoretic relevance and the statistical significance of independent variables to the dependent variable can be more important than a large R^2 value (Gujarati 1995). For this reason, I focus my analysis on the significance of the variables in question more than the R^2 value.

Qualitative Analysis – What it Means

Unlike the quantitative analysis that involved testing ideas and running equations, qualitative analysis is not as straight forward. The information gathered through the interviews was vast. Conversations covered information about individuals working lives as well as their interests and connections outside of work. The two-hour long interviews seldom followed similar paths as I chose to hear the interviewees' stories rather than proscribe a definitive set of questions. Therefore, the information needed to be synthesized and analyzed to appreciate the themes most relevant to individuals living alone.

Synthesizing Data

Conducting the interviews was a first step in the qualitative research process but to begin the synthesis and analysis of the data each interview was transcribed. I enlisted assistance in the transcription process; for those interviews that I did not transcribe personally, I crosschecked each transcript with the recorded interview to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were then loaded into a qualitative analysis program, textual analysis markup system (TAMS), so they could be coded systematically. TAMS also allowed me to manage the interview transcripts individually and as related sets.

Each transcript was coded using information revealed through the quantitative data to look for support for the quantitative time use findings. This coding related to how individuals thought about their time at work and at home and with others in related to their time and the time of colleagues in different household constellations. It revealed an understanding of time flexibility and a different relationship to their time, particularly at work and at home, than counterparts or experiences of people with roommates, partners, or children. However, the limits of connecting standard quantitative time use categories with individualize qualitative understandings of time became readily apparent.

To gain a deeper understanding of how individuals thought about their time, I undertook open coding on some initial transcripts where each coded on a line-by-line basis and new codes were created to capture the detail in the findings. Once a few interviews were coded in this manner and I found few new codes created, I narrowed the codes to those, which recurred throughout the interviews and provided another level of understanding in the data. These codes informed the remainder of the coding and enhanced the qualitative analysis.

Understanding Time Use

During and after the coding process, I used two analytic strategies to develop an understanding how individuals living alone thought about their time use. The first strategy allowed me to connect the qualitative data to the available quantitative data. I created a meta-analysis matrix that allowed me to look at the interviews as extension of the quantitative analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). The matrix provided information about the interviewees that connected each with specific expectations of time use at work, on

household maintenance, on household leisure, and involved in activities with others as predicted in the quantitative data. Using those codes related closely to the quantitative understanding of time, allowed me to gain a better understanding of how individuals living alone manage their time. However, as noted above, it also pointed to the limitations of connecting macro-level quantitative data with micro-level qualitative data.

In an effort to better understand the meaning of time use for individuals living alone, I moved on to a “grounded theory” method of analysis that allowed the themes of the data to emerge naturally in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1962). As I began the process of open coding, I wrote memos to capture my understanding of time use among individuals. These memos and further coding helped to clarify my thinking as the connections between themes and ideas began to appear. Through this combination of analytic strategies - meta analysis connected to the quantitative data and grounded theory to explore new insights, I was able to deepen my understanding of the lives of those living alone.

Context and Meaning of Balance

Using mixed methods to understand the use of time in the lives of individuals living alone provided me with the opportunity to recognize both the context and meaning of balance for individuals without strict roles and responsibilities. The ATUS data provided a clearer understanding of how individuals living alone spend their time in relation to others and the interviews illuminated what those differences mean to some. This pragmatic approach to research design and analysis afforded me with a rich and purposeful connection between generalizable knowledge of time use and personal experiences for a

population that has been overlooked in previous research. It is through this connection that I hoped to have situated their experience and clarified our understanding of individuals living alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

SINGLE LIVING IN CONTEXT

Research on work-life balance focuses attention on the struggles of dual career couples and parenting adults with no emphasis on how people without partners or children manage their time. This focus on the difficulty in maintaining a family in the midst of an increasingly demanding work schedule has led to calls for family-friendly work places (Christensen and Staines 1990; Kelly 2003). In the midst of these calls, there is no recognition on how these struggles affect those without children and how one creates a balanced life when living alone.

Acknowledging that some workers do not benefit from family friendly workplace policies, Elinor Burkett (2000) suggests that a focus on traditional family forms leaves those without children at a disadvantage. Individuals who do not have children are unable to utilize flexible employment policies designed for parents. Harriet Presser (2003) notes that men and women who are not married work more non-standard work hours than those with a spouse present. Yet, there is little written about how single adults living alone, behave at work, at home, and in the community.

Unlike many popular cultural stereotypes, people who live alone are not socially-isolated individuals married to their jobs and disconnected from the rest of the world. After the recent nomination of Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano to head the Department of Homeland Security for President Obama's administration, Rendell noted that she would

be “perfect for the job because for that job, you have to have no life. Janet has no family. Perfect. She can devote, literally, 19, 20 hours a day to it” (Collins 2008; Couloubis 2008). In contrast to the pronouncements of Governor Rendell, people who live alone have full and active lives and are members of many social networks. Single adults living alone belong to families, circles of friends, community organizations, social clubs, and churches. People who live alone come from every walk of life and participate in the same activities as those who live with others and also strive to balance their work life with their many personal commitments.

Yet, unlike people with children, spouses and partners sharing their households, people who live alone have to clearly define their lives outside of work because there are no others to provide externally defined boundaries. They must struggle to find time to build and maintain relationships, take care of their home and personal needs as well as consider the needs of friends and family. Through all of this, people who live alone struggle to define themselves in a society that honors partnership and parenting and discounts the ability to live a happy and fulfilled life alone. We only have a small understanding of the lives of people living alone; this chapter is a step toward filling in the picture.

A study by Naomi Gerstel and Natalia Sarkisian (2006) shows that while controlling for class, race, education, and age, singles - both men and women - are more likely to spend time with parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors than their married counterparts. Susan Ferguson (2000) and Roona Simpson (2003) study never married individuals and show they are intimately connected to families and communities. Sasha Roseneil (2004) along with Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl (2004, 2006) and the Friendship and

Non-Conventional Partnership project in Britain examine how friendship serves many functions of family and supports those who are not in traditional family relationships. Bella DePaulo (2006) and E. Kay Trimberger (2006) focus attention on how singles are stigmatized by society but manage to create rewarding and connected lives. All of this research suggests that singles are heavily involved in the life of their communities and maintenance of numerous relationships.

This chapter provides a better appreciation of where individuals living alone fit in the larger society. It answers the questions: a) do people who live alone spend their time at work differently than people living with others; and b) are there trends in how singles living alone spend their time outside of work? By looking at how individuals living alone compare demographically to people living with others; how much time on average each group of individuals spend on different activities related to time at work, at home, and time in the community; and when people are engaged in different activities, I provide context to see if individuals living alone are similar or different from those living with others. While this chapter explores the descriptive differences, later chapters will determine if these differences are significant or if other characteristics, such as age, race, and gender lead to these differences.

Insights and Assumptions

Individuals living alone are not limited to one segment of the population and there is no specific research on how these individuals spend their time or how they might interact differently than individuals in other households. Limited previous research and theory on time use for individuals living alone makes it difficult to develop firm

hypotheses. This chapter seeks to explore those differences despite the difficulty in developing firm hypotheses for how time is used in comparison to individuals in other households. However, based on previous studies, I expect to find differences in time use between people living alone and those living with others.

The previous research on work time provides some telling information into time use among those living alone. In her book, *The 24/7 Economy*, Presser (2003) discusses the growth in the number of people working non-standard and weekend shifts. Relevant to this discussion, Presser notes, “those who are not married (single, separated, divorced, or widowed) were more likely to work non-day or variable hours (24.6 percent) or weekends (35.9 percent) than those who were married with a spouse present” (2003: 34). Bella DePaulo recounts that as a single assistant professor it was anticipated that she could stay late or come to weekend events that her co-workers could not attend due to “family” obligations. Without definitive obligations outside of work, people living alone are expected to spend more time at work, in general, and during non-day and weekend hours, in particular.

Unlike time at work, there are no studies that examine how people in different living situations spend their time at home. The research on time at home largely examines gender, age, and ideological differences in time spent on housework and childcare. Since time at home involves unpaid family care, those without partners or children at home do not spend time on these activities. They do however spend time on other activities that take place at home or are focused on household and family maintenance, such as housework, consumer purchases, sleeping, dining, and leisure activities. As chores, bills and household activities are not greatly changed by the number of people present and

people who live alone are responsible for all household chores – doing laundry, dishes, taking out the garbage, etc. – people living alone may spend similar, if not more time on household activities as those with partners or children.

Yet, a number of the people interviewed for this study noted that living alone provided them with the flexibility to skip cleaning and other housework when it was deemed unnecessary. Since people who live alone spend little time on household family care, they have more time to spend on sleeping and personal care as well as dining and leisure. Based on information from interviewees, it seems that people who live alone will spend similar amounts of time on personal and home care activities and leisure but less time on in-home family care activities.

Unlike time at work, where there are some clear expectations for time use of those living alone, and time at home, where there is little empirical research on time use for individuals, there is mixed evidence regarding time spent in the community. Sociologist Eric Klinenberg (2002) notes that social isolation was an underlying reason for many of deaths in the 1995 Chicago heat wave. This finding indicates that people who live alone are not as connected to others and therefore at greater risk. However, research by Gerstel and Sarkisian (2007) show that unmarried individuals actually spend more time doing activities in the community and with extended family than their married counterparts. While the Gerstel and Sarkisian study looks at married versus unmarried individuals, the finding would seem to apply to those living alone as well. One interviewee, Brian, noted that fewer external time commitments for someone who lives alone allows for more flexibility than counterparts with children because “we can go anywhere we want pretty much of the time. [A friend with children has] got a lot of restriction on what he can do

and he's got a kid, a wife, a house." People who live alone have the time to take part in more and different types of social and community activities. On the other hand, people with children and partners are often engaged in community and neighborhood activities through their children and partners. People living alone may be more engaged in the community through informal activities and networks while those living with others may spend more time in formal community organizations.

This chapter explores these insights and assumptions for the time use of individuals living alone and other households. In particular, I examine how single adults fit within the larger population and whether there are noticeable differences in time use for individuals without partners and children. I show that people living alone do spend time differently than people living with others.

Population Demographics

To fully appreciate how people living alone manage time relative to people in other types of households, it is helpful to understand the population of single person households in relation to the larger population. When analyzing living arrangements, the U.S. Census Bureau separates family and non-family households. According to the Census, a family household is "a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage or adoption" (Fields 2003). Non-family households include people who live alone, cohabiting couples without children, and platonic housemates.

Between 1970 and 2003, the percentage of non-family households grew to 32 percent of the population and single adults living alone grew from 17 percent in 1970 to

26 percent in 2003, accounting for 81 percent of the population of non-family households. The U.S. Census Report on Families and Households from 2003 notes that while non-family households make up 32 percent of the population, married couples with children, married couples without children, and other family households (non-married adults with children, single mothers, and other “non-traditional” families) account for 23.3, 28.2, and 16.4 percent of the population respectively. Single person households are one of the fastest growing household types in the total population (Fields 2003). However, when studying people living alone, one’s living situation is important where marital status is not. This analysis focuses on four types of living situations: single adults, coupled adults, coupled parents, and single parents.

Using the roster of respondents’ households in the American Time Use Survey (ATUS), which provides a list of all the members of an individual’s household including ages, the respondents were coded as either a single adult living alone, coupled adults, coupled parents, and single parents. Single adults are those individuals living alone, coupled adults are multiple adults living together whether romantically involved or not, coupled parents are multiple individuals living with children whether married or not, and single parents are one adult living with children. Children are anyone in the family under the age of 18 so in some instances, the multiple adult households may consist of parents with children over age 18. Additionally, non-custodial parents are considered single living alone as the time with their children is noted as time with a non-household child.

Table 3 provides estimations of the demographic differences for individuals, ages 25-64. There are some striking differences between the different types of households. Since most childrearing takes place between ages 25 and 44, that group represents the

largest percentage of households with children, while multiple adult households without children are heavily represented between 45 and 64. Unlike the partnered and parenting households, individuals living alone are spread evenly across age groups, with slightly more individuals living alone in the 45-64 age groups.

The gender breakdown among single person households is equally interesting. According to the U.S. Census report on Families and Households, single women living alone make up 17 percent of the total population of households while men living alone comprise 12 percent. Among all single person households, ages 15-85, approximately 55 percent of that group are women while 45 percent are men. Yet, among those individuals living alone between the ages of 25 and 64, the percentage is reversed and men account for 55 percent of the population while women only account for 45 percent. At age 65, a major shift in the gender ratio among single person households occurs, with women over age 65 who live alone out-numbering men three to one (due to the fact that women live longer and are less likely to remarry when divorced). This is in contrast to coupled households where men and women are fairly evenly split and single parent households where women are the overwhelming majority.

Racial differences within household composition provide another interesting factor with non-Hispanic Black individuals, more highly represented in single person households than the population average, accounting for 17 percent of the population of people living alone, although they make up only 11 percent of the population overall. Hispanic individuals, while comprising 13 percent of the population overall, are less represented among those living alone, accounting for only eight percent of single person households.

Table 3: Demographic Data for Individuals, ages 25-64, in 4 Household Types (percent)*					
	Single Adults (5,131)	Coupled Adults (6,682)	Coupled Parents (13,155)	Single Parents (2,185)	Total (27,153)
Age					
25-34 Years	22.85	18.67	31.36	36.50	25.18
35-44 Years	21.22	13.57	41.73	40.72	27.33
45-54 Years	29.12	32.94	22.15	19.06	27.42
55-64 Years	26.81	34.83	4.76	3.72	20.07
Gender					
Women	44.66	49.50	51.18	82.31	50.86
Men	55.34	50.50	48.82	17.69	49.15
Race					
Non-Hispanic White	70.86	76.37	65.11	49.46	69.94
Non-Hispanic Black	17.03	9.46	9.62	32.22	11.35
Hispanic	7.74	8.75	19.14	14.60	13.19
Asian	3.08	3.96	4.99	2.35	4.21
Mixed Race	1.31	1.46	1.15	1.37	1.31
Education					
No HS Diploma	8.98	8.26	13.26	16.09	10.74
HS Diploma	45.52	50.34	44.19	53.53	47.29
College Degree	32.39	29.62	31.50	25.04	30.58
Advanced Degree	13.11	11.78	11.06	5.34	11.40
Household Income					
no information	12.59	14.73	11.58	11.48	13.02
Less than \$10k	11.16	2.58	2.86	19.38	4.42
\$10,000-24,999	18.91	8.32	9.20	25.32	10.67
\$25,000-49,999	31.47	21.66	22.13	29.54	23.39
\$50,000-74,999	15.37	20.46	20.35	9.38	19.35
\$75,000-99,999	5.81	13.76	14.64	2.42	12.69
\$100,000 and more	4.69	18.49	19.24	2.48	16.46
*Percents weighted; sample size is not.					

On factors related to socio-economic status, individuals living alone are both more educated and have less household income. The ATUS data show that people living alone are more represented in those with a college or advanced degree, with thirty-two percent holding a college degree and thirteen percent holding an advanced degree compared to thirty and eleven percent, respectively in the overall population. There is also a higher percentage in these categories compared to all of the other household types.

However, the story is opposite on household income, where individuals living alone are highly represented in those making less than \$50,000 a year but much less represented in the \$50,000 a year and over income. This is similar to single parent households, who are even more highly represented in households making less than \$25,000 a year. As should be expected, those individuals living in households with multiple adults are more highly represented in households with more than \$50,000 a year and less represented in the lower household incomes. Clearly, this shows that while people living alone may be more highly educated, this education does not provide an income advantage without sharing the household with another individual.

Examining how single person households fit in the larger population show that people living alone are spread through age, gender, and racial groupings. They are not heavily concentrated among one single population grouping even though there is some higher representation in older age groups, among non-Hispanic Black individuals, and those with higher education.

Time Use Comparisons

In this context, individuals living alone must balance their need for additional income with the cost and time for household and personal needs. As I have outlined people living alone do not have household family relationships to maintain but rather are connected to others through family, work, and community networks, it is important to have a better understanding of the people with whom individuals are spending their time. In many activities, especially dining and leisure, there is a qualitative difference in the experience when one is at home with household family members or alone than if that person is with friends, neighbors and extended family. While all of these activities may involve merely watching television, it may translate into a relaxing family activity at home or a social activity with friends. Therefore, time use has been split into categories based on who one is with during various activities (see Appendix A for a list of with whom people spend their time).

Looking at with whom people spend this time is important to help understand the personal and social forces that impact people who live alone. Most time use analyses look at aggregates of individual or coupled time use but do not examine exactly whom one is with during that time. While it is important for family researchers to look at how couples within a household negotiate their time, the following analyses look at individuals in different household arrangements to determine how and where individuals who live alone spend time differently or similarly to those living with others. It will give better insight into how people who live alone feel pulled to spend time on different activities.

I look at three time-related locations: time at work, time at home, and time in the community. Work time, while relatively self-explanatory, is also broken down into part-

time work and full-time work as well as work shifts. Time spent at home or in the community is a little less clearly defined. Household and personal care time can involve sleep and housework that routinely happen at home but also may involve care for household members as well as consumer purchases and services for personal or home use. Dining and leisure time include some activities that are home-based or personally-focused, such as leisure activities that take place alone or with one's household family members or activities that are community-based or externally-focused when it involves people outside the home. Therefore, subsequent analyses of dining and leisure look explicitly at who one is with during these times. Unlike leisure and dining time which can be spent alone, social time activities are externally-focused even when one attends or participates in an activity alone or with one's family members, such as attending or hosting events, going to movies, taking part in religious services or participating in team-based sports. These are activities that unquestionably involve others. Finally, community care time involves activities that are care focused, such as volunteering or caring for non-household members (see Appendix B for a more detailed list of activities).

Table 4 provides an overview of the amount of time spent on weekdays and weekends in these different arenas. The three main areas where the most time is spent are work, personal and household activities (which includes sleep), and dining and leisure activities. Individuals who live alone spend more time, on average, at work and in dining and leisure but less time on personal and household activities than others during weekdays as well as weekends and holidays. As seen in Table 4, during the week, people living alone spend five hours and 56 minutes at work where coupled adults spend five hours and 33 minutes, coupled parents spend five hours and 29 minutes, and single parents spend

four hours and 51 minutes. On average, people living alone spend approximately 23 minutes to one hour and five minutes more at work than people in other types of households. On the other hand, these individuals spend 33 minutes to two hours less time on personal and home care than other households. In dining and leisure time, individuals living alone spend only seven minutes more when compared to coupled adults but one hour more than other households. There is little difference in time spent socially and in community-based care activities no matter what type of household. However, the small amount of time spent on these activities in general (15 to 52 minutes) make five to 10 minutes a significant difference.

The same time use trends are present during weekends and holidays. However, less time is spent at work for all households during this period and more time is spent in other activities. While the difference in time spent at work is more than an hour between individuals living alone and single parents during the week that difference decreases to only 17 minutes on the weekend. Time use in all other activities increases on weekends and holidays. Meanwhile during the week there is no significant difference in social activity among individuals in various household types. On weekends and holidays, however, people living alone spend, on average 13 minutes more on social activities than single parents and eight minutes less than coupled parents. These findings suggest that individuals living alone do spend more time at work and less time at home than their counterparts in other households.

Time spent in the community is not as clearly delineated as some dining and leisure activities are home-focused while others are community-focused. The large aggregate categories of work time, personal and household care time, dining and leisure

time only give a small picture of time use based on household type. They do not give an indication of the various people with whom single adults living alone spend their time, whether these individuals spend more time working non-traditional hours, or in what kinds of in-home and community activities people participate. The following sections will investigate more fully each of the general categories of time use.

Table 4: Mean Times* Spent in General Categories on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Work Time	5:56	5:33 (0:23) [°]	5:29 (0:27) [°]	4:51 (1:04) [°]	5:33 (0:23)
Personal and Household Time	10:38	11:11 (-0:33) [°]	12:15 (-1:37) [°]	12:39 (-2:01) [°]	11:37 (-0:59)
Dining and Leisure Time	4:40	4:33 (0:07)	3:32 (1:07) [°]	3:38 (1:02) [°]	4:06 (0:33)
Social Time	0:52	0:50 (0:01)	0:47 (0:04) [°]	0:44 (0:07) [°]	0:49 (0:03)
Community Care Time	0:15	0:17 (-0:02)	0:11 (0:04) [°]	0:15 (-)	0:14 (0:01)
Weekends & Holidays					
Work Time	1:37	1:24 (0:12) [°]	1:25 (0:11) [°]	1:19 (0:17) [°]	1:26 (0:10)
Personal and Household Time	12:32	12:59 (-0:26) [°]	14:04 (-1:31) [°]	14:31 (-1:58) [°]	13:27 (-0:54)
Dining and Leisure Time	5:56	5:48 (0:08)	4:37 (1:18) [°]	4:39 (1:16) [°]	5:17 (0:39)
Social Time	1:51	1:47 (0:04)	2:00 (-0:08) [°]	1:37 (0:13) [°]	1:52 (-0:01)
Community Care Time	0:23	0:23 (-)	0:18 (0:04) [°]	0:22 (0:01)	0:21 (0:02)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences °indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

Work Time

Studies of work time lead to an expectation that people who live alone are more likely to work more non-standard work hours than their married counterparts. In order to understand this dynamic, Table 5 shows a breakdown of shift arrangements and job categories. It shows that individuals who live alone are slightly more represented in swing shift (4pm to midnight) and graveyard shift (midnight to 8am) positions than people in other types of households. Individuals living alone are also less represented in regular shift positions than people in multiple adult households but single parents are the least represented in regular shift positions. Individuals living alone may be more willing or more expected to work nonstandard hours because they do not have partners or children that require them to return home. This supports the previous findings that those not

Table 5: Workforce Characteristics for Individuals, ages 25-64, in 4 Household Types (percent)*					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Total
<i>Shift Work</i>					
Regular Shift	67.37	68.82	70.19	66.40	69.12
Swing Shift (4p-12a)	6.85	5.68	6.05	5.80	5.99
Graveyard Shift (12a-8a)	3.19	2.21	2.15	2.14	2.31
Other Shift	1.67	.92	1.21	.74	1.13
<i>Job Categories</i>					
Not Employed	21.05	22.57	20.65	25.50	21.69
Management/ Professional	34.95	30.41	31.52	23.84	31.19
Service	10.21	9.78	11.09	18.04	10.70
Sales/Office	17.19	19.15	17.26	20.34	18.16
Construction/Farming	16.58	18.09	19.47	12.28	18.26
*Percents weighted					

married work shift hours to a greater degree and shows that those without household companions are the most likely to work non-standard hours.

Perhaps related, a look at the distribution of the population in job categories also shows that people living alone are more represented in management and professional positions than other population groups. As noted earlier, single adults are more highly educated and these are the individuals who work long hours at the office and bring work home. Where individuals living alone are less represented in service positions than people in other living situations except for multiple adult households. Individuals in professional careers and without clearly defined external obligations may be expected to work longer hours if necessary and without the opportunity to leave work for personal concerns. This belief is echoed by many of those interviewed for this study who reiterate a workplace perception that people without children are expected to work longer and data shows that they do.

As noted in Table 6, single adults work 23 minutes to one hour and four minutes more than other households overall, yet the difference among hours for full-time workers on weekdays regardless of household composition is much smaller. In the case of multiple adult households, there is only a nine to 14 minute difference in work hours with single adults spending seven hours and 44 minutes at work, coupled adults spending seven hours and 34 minutes, and coupled parents spending seven hours and 29 minutes. Among full-time workers, the largest difference in work time is between single parents and single adults, where single parents spend six hours and 54 minutes in full time work, which is 50 minutes less than single adults living alone. In part-time work, there is a slightly greater difference among single adults and coupled parents during part-time weekday work, where

singles living alone work 21 minutes more a day than individuals in multiple adult households and only 16 minutes more than single parents.

Table 6: Mean Times* Spent at Work, Full-time, Part-time, Shift Work on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Time at Work (total sample)	5:56	5:33 (0:23) [°]	5:29 (0:27) [°]	4:51 (1:04) [°]	5:33 (0:23)
<i>By Worker Status</i>					
Full-time Workers	7:44	7:34 (0:09)	7:29 (0:14) [°]	6:54 (0:50) [°]	7:32 (0:11)
Part-time Workers	4:11	4:07 (0:03)	3:50 (0:21)	3:55 (0:16)	3:59 (0:13)
<i>By Shift</i>					
Swing Shift	7:22	6:08 (1:14) [°]	6:21 (1:01) [°]	7:05 (0:17)	6:26 (0:56)
Graveyard Shift	6:49	5:27 (1:21) [°]	6:18 (0:31)	5:40 (1:08)	6:01 (0:47)
Weekends & Holidays					
Time at Work (total sample)	1:37	1:24 (0:12) [°]	1:25 (0:11) [°]	1:19 (0:17) [°]	1:26 (0:10)
<i>By Worker Status</i>					
Full-time Workers	2:04	1:55 (0:08)	1:52 (0:12) [°]	1:53 (0:10)	1:55 (0:09)
Part-time Workers	1:59	1:20 (0:39) [°]	1:11 (0:48) [°]	1:27 (0:32)	1:20 (0:39)
<i>By Shift</i>					
Swing Shift	4:35	4:20 (0:14)	3:43 (0:51) [°]	5:05 (-0:29)	4:08 (0:26)
Graveyard Shift	4:50	3:55 (0:55) [°]	4:43 (0:07)	4:37 (0:13)	4:25 (0:24)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences; [°] indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

The largest time difference during the workweek, however, is among individuals in swing and graveyard shift work. Individuals living alone who work swing shift jobs spend approximately 17 minutes more than single parents in swing shift positions and more than one hour more time in swing shift positions than individuals in households with multiple adults. Additionally, individuals living alone and working in graveyard shift positions, work 30 minutes to one hour and 21 minutes more on average than individuals working graveyard shifts in other types of households.

There is a continuation of this pattern when we examine work time conducted on weekends and holidays. Household type indeed makes a small difference in the amount of time spent at work during these periods for full-time employees, with single adults living alone spending eight to 12 minutes more at work during weekends and holidays than other households. The discrepancy between work time on weekends and holidays single parents and single adults has lessened considerably in weekend hours for full-time and shift workers. However, the difference in time at work for part-time workers increases during over the weekend with individuals living alone working 32 to 48 minutes more working part time on weekends. Single adults living alone and working swing and graveyard shift hours continue to work more hours on weekends than other groups except when compared to single parents in swing shift positions who work almost 30 more minutes on weekends.

These data show that, overall, people who live alone work more hours than individuals in almost every other household constellations. The larger discrepancy in weekend part-time work as well as the difference in time spent at swing shift and graveyard

shift jobs supports the premise that people who live alone spend more time at non-standard work hours than their partnered and parenting counterparts.

When discussing work hours, interviewees frequently expressed the desire to work fewer hours than they currently do. One woman, Amanda, a computer contractor, mentioned that she left a position because she was on call regularly, including weekend and evening troubleshooting. It was difficult, she said, to make plans for other activities. Her new position, she explained, provides more stability in work hours, yet she recounted a conversation with her new supervisor that emphasized how her personal situation impacted what was expected of her at work:

We were talking about working weekends and overtime. And he said something like, "Maybe if you had a family or a pet then it would be a concern." And I said, "You know I do have a family. Just because I'm not married or have kids doesn't mean I don't have a family. And they do enjoy seeing me." It was very strange because he made it seem like those people have an excuse to leave work but what is yours? (Amanda, 35).

This assumption, that single employees lack of clearly defined commitments, is only part of the reason that people who live alone work more hours. For another interviewee, working long hours at the office allows him to forget about work when he gets home and maintain a line between work and home. For individuals in non-professional positions, monetary concerns also lead to working more hours. Sophia, an interviewee working overnight shifts in a group home setting with developmentally disabled adults revealed similar requests to work long hours. Officially, she is scheduled to work only four shifts but regularly works 50 to 70 hours a week because when asked to work extra shifts, she regularly accepts them due to her own financial needs. As she says:

When you're single and/or you don't really have family to speak of, if something happens in your life that can be dramatic or traumatic, there isn't

as much to fall back on. And you can very much fall through the cracks. And I was very close to being homeless at least once (Sophia, 48).

For her, working long hours was a result of necessity as well as pressure from her employer. Since she was not directly connected to any family members, she was not in a financial position to forgo the additional income. People living alone must contend with their need to work to sustain their own livelihood but also worry about the expectations employers have regarding their availability and commitment to work.

Personal and Household Time

Unlike time spent at work, which has a shared perception no matter one's living situation, time at home can mean very different things depending on one's household situation and expectations. In addition to sleep and personal care that take place at home, there is work that must be done, such as preparing food, cleaning house, doing dishes and paying bills. For this analysis, the personal and household time division includes sleep and personal care as well as household work and consumer purchases, such shopping for household goods, personal and professional services, and household services.

Table 7 shows the mean times that different household constellations spend on these activities during weekdays and weekends or holidays. Straying from the anticipated outcome, individuals living alone do not sleep or take part in other personal care activities considerably more or less than individuals in other households. The real difference in time at home is time spent on housework and household care.

During the work week people living alone spend an average of 20 to 30 minutes less doing household work than individuals in other types of households. Of particular

note is that single parents actually do more household work on weekends than other multiple person households while they do slightly less household work during the work week than those household with multiple adults. Taking into account both weekday and

Table 7: Mean Times* Spent in Personal and Home Care Activities on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Personal and Household	10:38	11:11 (-0:33) [°]	12:15 (-1:37) [°]	12:39 (-2:01) [°]	11:37 (-0:59)
Sleeping	8:06	8:03 (0:03)	8:01 (0:05)	8:19 (-0:12) [°]	8:03 (0:03)
Other Personal Care	0:49	0:49 (-)	0:40 (0:08) [°]	0:53 (-0:04)	0:46 (0:03)
Household Work	1:17	1:46 (-0:28) [°]	1:49 (-0:31) [°]	1:40 (-0:22) [°]	1:43 (-0:26)
Consumer Services	0:24	0:27 (-0:03) [°]	0:27 (-0:03) [°]	0:26 (-0:02)	0:27 (-0:03)
HH Family Care	0:00	0:03 (-0:03) [°]	1:16 (-1:16) [°]	1:18 (-1:18) [°]	0:36 (-0:36)
Weekends & Holidays					
Personal and Household	12:32	12:59 (-0:26) [°]	14:04 (-1:31) [°]	14:31 (-1:58) [°]	13:27 (-0:54)
Sleeping	9:11	9:06 (0:05)	9:07 (0:04)	9:23 (-0:11) [°]	9:08 (0:03)
Other Personal Care	0:46	0:43 (0:02)	0:38 (0:07) [°]	0:49 (-0:03)	0:41 (0:04)
Household Work	2:00	2:28 (-0:28) [°]	2:30 (-0:30) [°]	2:39 (-0:38) [°]	2:26 (-0:26)
Consumer Services	0:34	0:37 (-0:02)	0:40 (-0:05) [°]	0:44 (-0:09) [°]	0:38 (-0:04)
HH Family Care	0:00	0:02 (-0:02) [°]	1:07 (-1:07) [°]	0:54 (-0:54) [°]	0:31 (-0:31)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences °indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

weekend time spent, multiple adult households and single parent households all complete more than four hours of household work while people living alone spend three hours and 17 minutes. While everyone does more household work on the weekends, households with multiple adults complete more work throughout the week, single parents complete more on the weekend and people living alone do less in general.

These differences in time use are supported through my qualitative interviews, particularly when related to housework. At various points during the interviews, most subjects stated that they did not do household chores if those felt unnecessary. For example, one man, Brian noted that he did grocery shopping on the weekends but “other shopping I despise so I do it as infrequently as I possibly can.” On the subject of cleaning and housekeeping, Gina stated that living alone and having a roommate made a difference in how she approached the task:

I love to cook and it's like living alone I always cook too much food. And she hated to cook so I would cook, she would eat, she would clean up. And I don't like cleanup. So it was nice to have that and have someone appreciate it that I would cook. So those are all things that I miss about having a roommate. But you live alone long enough and you're sort of like totally... like I only have to clean up when I want to. There are all these great things about living alone (Gina, 31).

The people that I interviewed expressed a preference for being able to decide when to do and not do the housework, some stating that when they come home from work they are too tired to attend to household chores. Additionally, one's living situation may impact the amount of time spent on household work. Most individuals interviewed either rented apartments or lived in condominium buildings where they were not responsible for major household work. Tom, stated, “I rent so the upkeep on my apartment is not my concern outside of vacuuming the carpet and mopping the floors.”

Predictably, people living alone spend no time on household care activities because they have no other household members for whom to care. Coupled adults without children also do little family care work but individuals with children spend more than one hour doing household care work during weekdays and 55 minutes to one hour and seven minutes on the weekends and holidays.

Dining and Leisure Time

Time at work and time spent on household and personal care activities are similar in style if not degree regardless of one's living situation. All individuals need to find time to sleep and care for their home. Time spent on dining and leisure activities, however, are not necessarily similar across household type or situation. Dining alone or with one's household family is a different experience than eating with friends or relatives outside the home. Household family members or individuals may go out to eat but they are taking part in the necessary personal and family care and enhancement activity of "feeding the family" as sociologist Marjorie Devault (1991) would contend.

On the other hand, when one invites in others into their home for dinner or goes out to eat with friends or family members who do not live in the home, the activity is more social and part of building and maintaining community as much a family maintenance. Similarly, leisure time, whether watching television, reading, or relaxing, the experience is different depending on whom one is with at the time. One interviewee mentioned that what he missed most about having a roommate was "just to chill, sit on the couch and have a beer, watch a little TV together or something like that." When people spend time

with others outside their home, this becomes a more social and externally focused activity and less leisurely.

This time spent with others in dining and leisure activities is similar to the time that families spend together but also contains some different expectations. For that reason, dining and leisure activities have been split into time spent alone, time spent with household family, and time spent with others.

Table 8 provides the mean time spent on these activities dependent on household type. During weekdays, individuals living alone spend 35 minutes dining alone while other households spend 12 to 19 minutes dining alone. On the other hand, individuals living with others spend 18 to 31 minutes dining with in-home family members during the week. For those individuals in households with multiple adults more time is spent dining with family or alone than either household with single adults, approximately 46 and 44 minutes respectively. Only single parents spend less time dining with household family or alone than single adults living alone, spending only 32 minutes on average.

Looking at the time spent dining with people other than household family members, many of these differences in mean times are not as striking but still show differences. Individuals who live alone spend 25 minutes on average dining with others during the week while those in other household types spend 16 to 19 minutes dining with non-household members. There are overall similarities in the amount of time spent dining for most individuals, but for those people who live alone their time is primarily divided between the time spent alone or with others outside their home, while individuals in other households spend more time alone or with household family members than with others.

This lessened amount of time on dining may be that for single individuals, with or without children, dining is a secondary activity that is not tracked.

Table 8: Mean Times* Spent Dining on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Total Time Dining	1:02	1:08 (-0:05) [°]	1:01 (-)	0:50 (0:12) [°]	1:04 (-0:01)
Dining Alone	0:35	0:19 (0:16) [°]	0:12 (0:23) [°]	0:13 (0:22) [°]	0:18 (0:17)
Dining with HH Family	0:00	0:27 (-0:27) [°]	0:31 (-0:31) [°]	0:18 (-0:18) [°]	0:25 (-0:25)
Dining with Others	0:25	0:19 (0:06) [°]	0:16 (0:09) [°]	0:17 (0:08) [°]	0:19 (0:06)
Weekends & Holidays					
Total Dining Time	1:05	1:13 (-0:08) [°]	1:12 (-0:06) [°]	0:58 (0:06) [°]	1:11 (-0:05)
Dining Alone	0:29	0:12 (0:17) [°]	0:06 (0:23) [°]	0:10 (0:19) [°]	0:11 (0:17)
Dining with HH Family	0:00	0:34 (-0:34) [°]	0:45 (-0:45) [°]	0:25 (-0:25) [°]	0:34 (-0:34)
Dining with Others	0:35	0:26 (0:09) [°]	0:19 (0:16) [°]	0:21 (0:14) [°]	0:24 (0:11)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences °indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

During weekends, individuals living alone continue to spend more time eating alone than individuals in other households. Overall, every group spends less time overall dining alone on weekends but individuals living with others spend more time dining with household members and others while people living alone spend less time eating alone and more time dining with others. On weekends, those living alone spend 35 minutes dining

with others while those living with others only spend 19 to 26 minutes dining with others and members of their households.

In regards to dining, most of the people interviewed recognize the importance of eating regular meals but in practice find it difficult to have consistent regular meals. Becca, stated that she tries to take lunch whenever she can and “for dinner I’ll eat like spaghetti or salad or a soup or pasta or whatever is laying around the house to make.” Most individuals had standard breakfast and lunch routines but dinner was different. While many noted that they enjoyed cooking, preparing dinner was sometimes daunting when alone. For example, Mia mentions that she finds cooking a nurturing hobby and typically cooks a full meal for herself but “on really rare occasions, if I’m super tired will I do something like eat a bagel for dinner or cereal or crackers and cheese if I’m in a weird mood.” Eating cereal or crackers and cheese was mentioned by many others as well and Brian noted that it was different for his friends with children and parents who “would think that’s crazy. They have got to fix dinner for the kids. They have the meat/vegetable whatever.”

Dining when alone is something that provides sustenance and can be flexible for individuals living alone but dining with friends is a different matter. When asked what she did with her “faux family” as she called her group of friends, Kelli, noted “Eating. It’s usually eating. Sitting around the table eating and there are some side conversations.” The social aspects of dining with others are particularly noticeable when it is a struggle. Two other interviewees, Dee and Amanda, noted that they were on a dieting plan and it changed their normal social activities. When talking about time spent with friends Dee, age 30, says, “we always do birthday outings. Typically that’s for food unfortunately!”

They needed to find other ways to spend time together that did not involve food. On the other end of the spectrum, a Tom, noted that when he was new to town he would go out to a pub to eat to be social, “At least I was out because I thought that was the important thing.” For people living alone, dining with friends and others is a social activity that provides areas of interaction that they miss when alone. A similar pattern can be found in how people spend their leisure time. Leisure times are defined as those times when one is relaxing, thinking, watching television but not actively socializing.

Table 9 shows the differences in time spent on leisure activities. During the week, individuals who live alone spend approximately three hours and 29 minutes in leisurely activities while coupled adults spend a similar amount of time. Those individuals with children whether single or with other adults, spend 45 minutes to an hour less time on leisure activities. Those time differences are largely tied to time spent on household family care activities, some of which include leisure activities with children. Individuals with children spend an hour or more on family care while individuals without children spend almost no time on care activities.

As expected, single adults living alone spend about three hours on leisure activities alone. This is twice as much time as coupled adults (one hour 35 minutes) and single parents (one hour 34 minutes) and three times as much as coupled parents (51 minutes). However, the difference is reduced when the time these households spend on leisure activities with their household family members is taken into consideration. Coupled adults without children, spend on average one hour and 24 minutes in leisure with other household members for a total of 3 hours on average which is nearly identical to the time spent by single adults without children. For coupled parents there continues to be a 46

minutes difference in leisure time on the weekdays and a 38-minute difference for single parents with individuals living alone spending more time on leisure activities than others. As with dining, individuals who live alone spend more time alone in leisure activities but also more time with friends and others. During weekdays, people living alone spend twice as much time on leisure activities with people outside the home (25 minutes) than multiple adults (13 minutes) and single parents (13 minutes) and five times as much time with others as coupled parents (5 minutes). Weekends show a similar pattern but those in coupled and parenting households spend more time socializing with others on weekends.

Table 9: Mean Times* Spent in Leisure Activities on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Total Leisure Time	3:29	3:18 (0:10) [°]	2:26 (1:02) [°]	2:45 (0:43) [°]	2:56 (0:32)
Leisure Alone	3:02	1:35 (1:26) [°]	0:51 (2:10) [°]	1:34 (1:28) [°]	1:28 (1:34)
Leisure with HH Family	0:00	1:24 (-1:24) [°]	1:24 (-1:24) [°]	0:50 (-0:50) [°]	1:12 (-1:12)
Leisure with Others	0:25	0:13 (0:12) [°]	0:05 (0:20) [°]	0:13 (0:12) [°]	0:11 (0:13)
Weekends & Holidays					
Total Leisure Time	4:43	4:29 (0:13) [°]	3:22 (1:21) [°]	3:38 (1:05) [°]	3:29 (0:21)
Leisure Alone	3:50	1:52 (1:57) [°]	0:57 (2:53) [°]	1:38 (2:11) [°]	1:43 (2:06)
Leisure with HH Family	0:00	2:00 (-2:00) [°]	2:04 (-2:04) [°]	1:23 (-1:23) [°]	1:45 (-1:45)
Leisure with Others	0:52	0:35 (0:17) [°]	0:20 (0:32) [°]	0:34 (0:18) [°]	0:30 (0:22)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences °indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

Interviewees see leisure time alone as a recuperative. When asked what she likes to do when alone, Mia, says “listen to music or read a good book or watch TV or do something in my house just to decompress and enjoy the day and stretch out my body and stretch out my mind.” There was a sense of being able to relax when alone. On the other hand, television watching and other leisure activities are part of the social spectrum of time spent with others. Amanda notes that with her best friend they don’t go out a lot but “we hang out a lot.” Similarly, another interviewee, Bob says that when he spends time with one of his closest friends, the activities are leisurely:

Usually we watch TV, play chess or go over games or just talk about what’s going on with him or what’s going on with me, compare. We’re both into watching DVDs, TV shows, so we compare what we’ve got (Bob, 47).

For individuals living alone, time spent in dining and leisure activities are part of the mix of creating a balanced life. Individuals spend time alone to sustain themselves but involved with others in developing and maintaining friendships.

Social and Community Care Time

The final two groupings that I examine in this chapter are time spent on social activities and community care activities. Unlike time at work, personal and household care time, and dining and leisure, social time accounts for little of one’s time during the week and only slightly more during the weekends. Additionally, the time differences in these categories are very small. Most people spend 45 to 52 minutes on social activities during the week and around 2 hours on the weekend. The only people with marginally less time spent socializing are single parents who only spend one hour and 37 minutes on the weekends. For community care time, individuals spend around 15 minutes during the

week and 25 minutes on the weekend. A concrete breakdown of these categories into smaller activities provides little insight into the differences among households.

Table 10: Mean Times* Spent in Socializing and Community Care on Weekdays and Weekends/Holidays (Single Adults time difference)**					
	Single Adults	Coupled Adults	Coupled Parents	Single Parents	Overall Mean
Weekdays					
Social Time	0:52	0:50 (0:01)	0:47 (0:04) [°]	0:44 (0:07) [°]	0:49 (0:03)
Community Care Time	0:15	0:17 (-0:02)	0:11 (0:04) [°]	0:15 (-)	0:14 (0:01)
Weekends & Holidays					
Social Time	1:51	1:47 (0:04)	2:00 (-0:08) [°]	1:37 (0:13) [°]	1:52 (-0:01)
Community Care Time	0:23	0:23 (-)	0:18 (0:04) [°]	0:22 (0:01)	0:21 (0:02)
*times are in hours and minutes; **rounding leads to discrepancies in time differences °indicates statistical significance at the .05 level					

Individuals living alone spend similar time in social activities as coupled adults without children. Additionally, there is little difference in the amount of time spent on community care activities, such as volunteering and caring for non-household members, between single adults with and without children and coupled adults without children. Only coupled adults with children spend marginally more time in social activities during weekend hours but less time caring for non-household members and volunteering. Overall, these times are only marginally different.

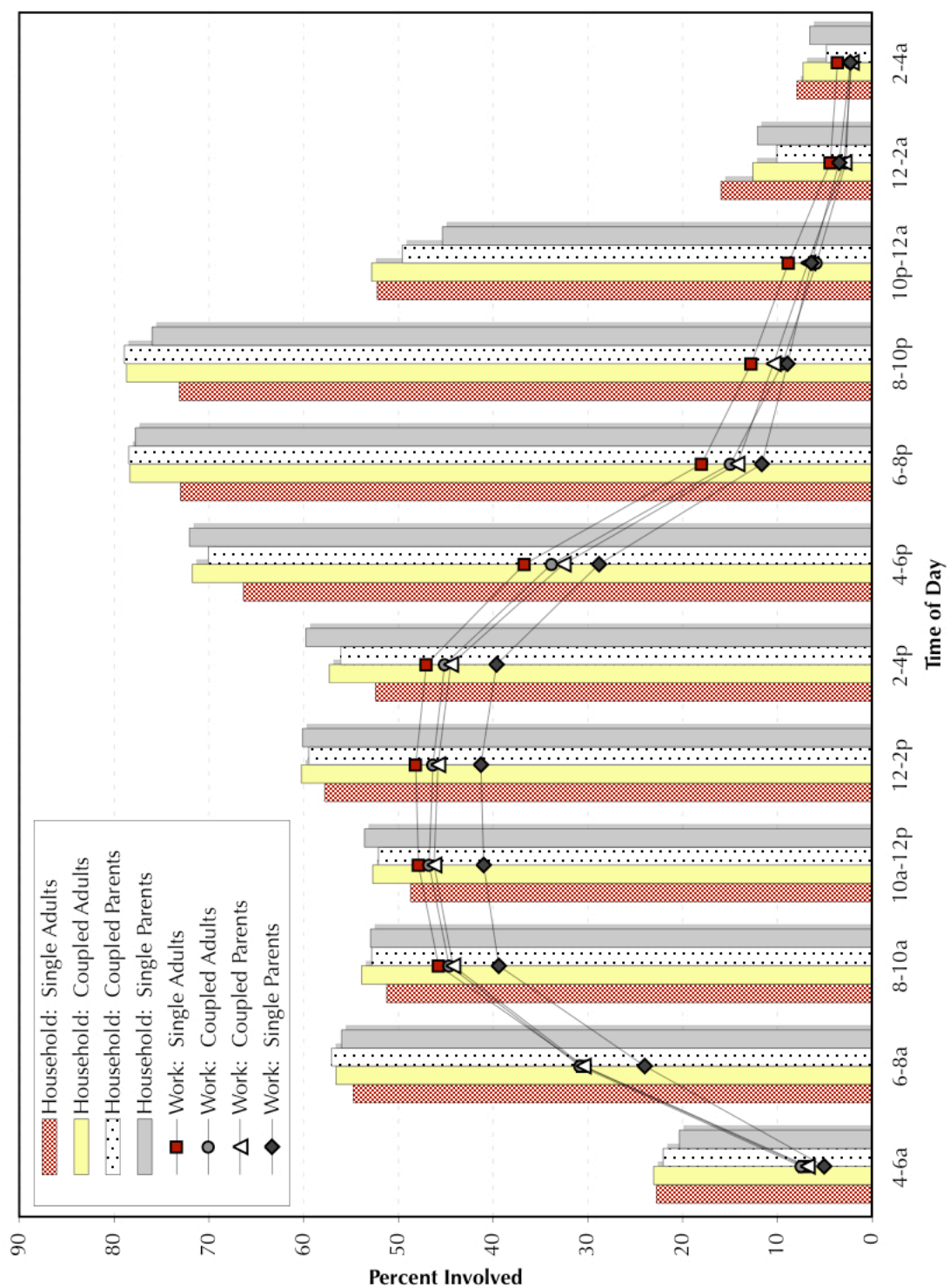
Time Use throughout the Day

The previous analyses show that people living alone spend more time at work, less time on household and personal care, less time on dining and leisure alone or with household members, more time on dining and leisure with others, and more time in social and community activities. In addition to looking at how much time is spent, it is interesting to see when these activities are completed during the day. Figures 2 and 3 visually show the percentage of single adults living alone and other adults involved in all household activities or activities with others and how that intersects with time at work.⁶ Sleep time is not included in these graphs because sleep takes up a considerable amount of time but does not largely vary. Additionally, since dining and leisure activities are different depending on who one is with, dining and leisure alone or with household family members is included in household activities while dining and leisure with others is included in time with others. For comparative purposes, both graphs use the same scale and include the percentage of people involved in paid work as a reference.

Much like the earlier data, Figure 2 shows that more individuals living alone spend time at work and less time on household activities than their counterparts throughout the day. The only time that more individuals living alone are involved in household activities than their counterparts is between the hours of 10 pm and 4 am. Similar percentages of all individuals spend time at work in the early morning hours from 4 to 8 am but as the day progresses; the percent of single adults working surpasses the percent of other adults,

⁶ Times on these graphs are grouped into two-hour segments for ease of presentation but the actual data provides detail as small as one-minute increments; therefore, individuals can participate in more than one activity during a time segment leading to more than one hundred percent involvement in activities.

Figure 2: Percentage of Individuals Engaged in Household Activities and Paid Work throughout the Day by Household Type

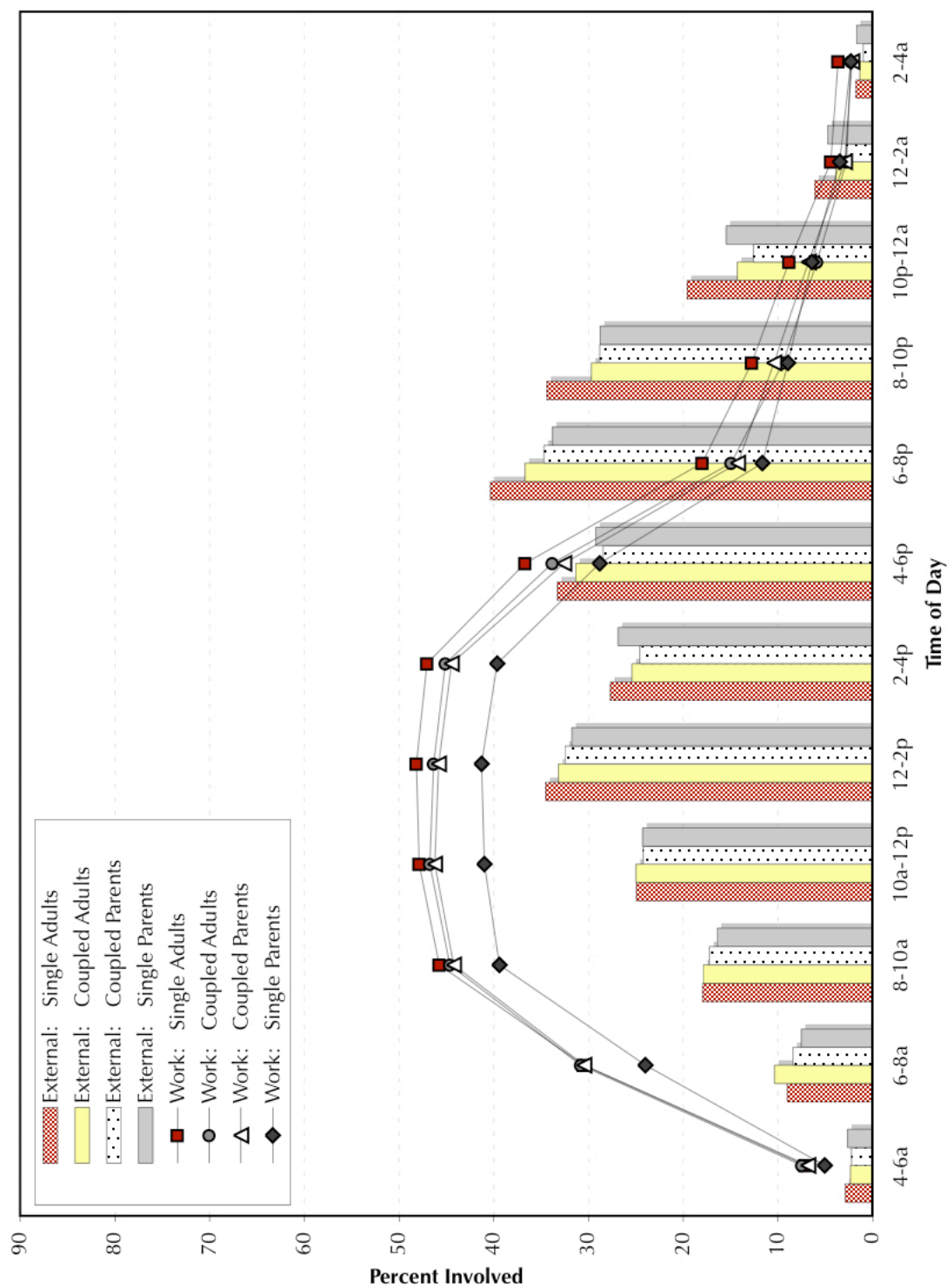


confirming that more people living alone work during non-standard hours. It also shows that more single individuals complete household activities or spend leisure time alone during the late night hours when they are not with others.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of individuals participating in activities with others throughout the day. While it is notable that fewer people are involved in activities with others throughout the day, the smaller percentages are consistent with findings that people spend more time in household activities than activities with others. Most important for this study is that more individuals who live alone spend time with others than other adults throughout the day except during the morning hours from six to eight am. The late afternoon through nighttime hours show the largest gap between the percentage of single person households spending time with others. From four to ten pm, this gap is almost equal to the smaller percentage of single individuals involved in household activities. It is likely that during this time, people living alone are engaging with friends and neighbors socially rather than spending time in leisure activities with household members or on other household activities.

The higher percentage of people living alone engaged in paid work from two pm through four am reinforces the evidence that a higher percentage of single adults working swing shift hours when many others are involved in home care and social activities. Those individuals who live alone and work into the evening and nighttime hours are missing out on the time when most individuals are either taking care of necessary home activities or socializing with others in the community. These individuals lose the opportunity to spend time building and maintaining relationships and are at greatest risk for social isolation. This is reinforced by interviewees, such as a bartender who notes that it is difficult to spend

Figure 3: Percentage of Individuals Engaged in Activities with Others and Paid Work throughout the Day by Household Type



time with people who work nine to five unless they come into the bar while he is at work. While a woman working retail in the evenings and weekends says that she has to plan ahead to make sure and see friends when they are both free.

Assessing Time Use among Households

In gauging work-life balance for individuals in single person households, time at home and time with others must be weighed against time at work. The comparisons with people in other households show us that people living alone have different time use trends than people living with others, whether coupled adults without children or adults with children. The data show that individuals who live alone spend more time alone and also spend more time with people outside their home than individuals in other household types.

The analysis has shown, individuals living alone are more highly represented in non-standard shift work and work more hours than their counterparts except in relation to single parents working weekend swing shifts. As individuals living alone are more represented in professional and managerial careers, they are those expected to work longer hours or take work home.

On average individuals who live alone spend less time on household activities, whether work or dining and leisure but rather than spending more time on sleeping and personal care, time on these activities is relatively similar across household types. Individuals living alone however, spend more time dining with external family members and others than people with household companions and children.

Finally, the idea that people who live alone do spend more time in the community. Time spent on external social activities and community care activities, whether formal volunteering or care for non-household adults and children, is limited for all individuals. On average, all people spend less than 2 hours on social activities and only around 15 to 25 minutes on community care activities. However, individuals who live alone do spend more time on dining and leisure activities with people outside their home. Those who live alone are more likely to spend time with others watching television, dining, and just hanging out with friends.

Trends in Time Use

In addition to the mixed support for the earlier suppositions, some interesting trends arise in the data. In some activities people who live alone spend their time similarly to couples without children and in other instances single adults with or without children are more similar. It seems that the only household type that consistently spends time differently than individuals living alone are coupled adults with children.

In looking at leisure time, both single adults and coupled adults without children spend more time than their counterparts with children. People without children have more time for personal leisure and time with friends due to an hour a day less in care work for household children. However, for coupled adults this time not spent on household family care is counteracted with more time spent in leisure activities with the other adults in the household. For individuals living alone, more of their time is spent in activities with others. Additionally, people who live alone spend more time on work activities.

It is the households with multiple adults and children who spend the least amount of time in dining and leisure activities with others. Yet both households with children spend considerably more time on family care activities and all households with multiple members spend more time on housework.

Over the course of a week, individuals living alone, spend more time at work and more time with others than individuals in households with multiple members. They also spend more time alone than individuals in other households but much of that time is equal to the amount of time others spend alone or with household family members. Since people living alone do not sleep or spend more time on personal care, the real time differences are between in-home family care and housework. People living alone forgo housework and spend the time that might be spent on household family care in activities with people outside their homes, whether at work, with extended family or friends. As shown by the timing of daily activities, more individuals in single person households work during the late afternoon and evening hours and those individuals may not be able to socialize with others who work more regular schedules.

Demanding Roles

One reason for the differences in less time spent with others outside of the home is that people who live with others often have defined roles of parent or partner. These roles demand that time outside of work be spent on personal, home, and family care as well as in dining and leisure activities with household members. People who live alone, however, are less defined by a specific role and are often expected to work long or different hours. This lack of definition as parent or partner leads to a more varied social web.

People living alone are not tied to the expectations of others within the house but maintain friendships and relationships through work and leisure activities. By spending more time on activities with outside constituencies – whether friends, co-workers, or extended family members - the social lives of those living alone are more externalized. Their lives outside of work, household chores, and personal care involve inviting outsiders to their home or visiting others. While leisure and dining are not explicit care work, they are times spent engaging with others, building community, and supporting their own social needs.

Without defined expectations of care, their time with others is both more open and less essential. The interviewees in this study note that their time is flexible, particularly when compared to those people with children, but that requires them to reach out to others. For example, one interviewee who has lived alone for ten years, notes that he must make time with friends or risk losing them and another expresses that she would not see her friends who were married as regularly if she did not make the plans. They have their lives settled and she needs to draw them out.

For people who live alone, the lack of defined family role leads requires negotiation of time with others who have more set and hard roles and responsibilities. While individuals living alone may have flexibility in their time, they are constrained by the schedules of others. More time spent in external networks of work obligations, family commitments and friendship expectations requires a balance between one's own needs and the needs of others in a nuanced manner. People living alone negotiate time in many directions, manage their schedules in relation to the schedules and wishes of friends, employers and family members, and contend with their own personal and home needs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL IDENTITY AND TIME USE

The previous chapter provided descriptive evidence using time use statistics and interview data that people living alone spend more time at work, in dining and leisure activities with others, and less time in household work and care activities. However, these differences are not necessarily the same for all people living alone. This chapter will extend that analysis to examine whether these differences in time are related to one's social position as a single adult living alone or other demographic and workforce characteristics. Additionally, I will be looking at whether there is an interaction between one's status as a single person household and one's gender, race, ethnicity or age.

Women in coupled households are more likely to do house and care work and less likely to work in full-time and professional jobs (Hochschild 1989; Milkie and Peltola 1999; Robinson and Godbey 1997). Additionally, one study of time use notes that married women have less free time than their single counterparts while married men and single men have similar free time (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003). Research on race, gender and housework shows that coupled Black men and women are more likely to share housework while coupled Hispanic men and women have stronger gender role expectations of housework (Orbuch and Eyster 1997). These differences are largely examined in coupled relationships but looking at the impact of gender and race for single person households

may provide clues to whether these differences are related to gender expectations or household arrangements.

On the other hand, one's position in the workplace impacts and is impacted by one's relationships at home (Gerson 2002, 2004; Hochschild 1997; Presser 2003). These researchers show that both one's gender and one's work environment impact how an individual manages time at work and in the home. They suggest that available resources and class expectations often lead to differences in activities at home.

As occupation and gender impact one's home and work life, time availability and generational change may impact one's involvement in formal and informal community engagement. Research suggests that older adults spend more time in community organizations and with others (Putnam 1996, 2000). Although others argue that people continue to be involved with others but in more informal ways (Dahlin, Kelly, and Moen 2008; Ladd 1999)

These previous studies show that sex and gender, race, work situation and age all have impacts on how individuals spend their time. Although not noted or fully developed in the literature, whether a person lives alone or with others is another important social characteristic that impacts how individuals split their time between work, home and community. For example, people living alone must be both the breadwinner and caregiver for their households. Intersections between one's social identities lead to different outcomes among individuals. This chapter takes an intersectional perspective to analyze how the differences in household type affect major areas of time use as well as how demographic characteristics and work characteristics impact one's time use. I show under what circumstances living alone impacts one's time at work, at home, and with others.

Additionally, I examine how other social identifiers, such as race, class, and sex impact an individuals use of time.

Intersectional Perspectives

Recent literature on social identity acknowledges that identity groupings, such as gender, race and class, differently impact individuals and people are not concretely defined by only one identity characteristic but rather by many characteristics that intersect. These differences are not additive in that each characteristic adds some level of difference to an individual's experience but Black women experience their world differently than White women or Black men and, relevant to this research, women living alone may experience their time differently than men living alone or women living with others. Therefore, an attempt to broaden our understanding of inequality to look at the impacts and connections between various forms of inequality is necessary (Crenshaw 1988, 1991; Hill Collins 2001; Yuval-Davis 2006). Within the literature on intersectionality there is a debate on the importance of looking at broader structural impacts of the junction between different social positions rather than focusing on the more localized experiences of individuals. It is important to both focus on individual experiences of intersectional inequality and also the larger structural components of the impacts of social identity on groups (Marx Ferree 2008).

One proponent of looking at larger structural trends to analyze intersectional differences is Leslie McCall (2007), who in "The Complexity of Intersectionality," suggests a paradigm for inter-categorical intersectionality that examines differences and similarities across social identity groups using large-scale survey data. McCall notes that there are

three ways of looking at intersectionality. One way is to deconstruct social identification as a concept in order to show how social identity narrowly and often wrongly categorizes individuals. Another way is to examine the intricacies of one social identity group and show how various forms of oppression intersect to impact that group's life experiences. For the third way, inter-categorical intersectionality, McCall suggests using large-scale data sets to look at how various identity characteristics work together. Using this McCall's model, I examine single adults living alone as a social group that intersects with many other social identifiers but not necessarily equally. While it is not possible to look at all social identifiers in any study, this method allows me to use the ATUS to tease out the intersections of convergence and divergence in social identity.

This study starts with an examination of whether individuals living alone are significantly different in the way they spend their time than counterparts in other living situations. Then I look to whether the demographic characteristics of gender, race and ethnicity, age, household income or education make a difference in time use as well as the impact of workforce characteristics, such as work shift, labor force status, and occupation. Finally, I also examine how living single may interact with other demographic categories to show the intersection between one's identity as a single adult living alone and one's gender, race and ethnicity, or age.

Regression Analyses

The previous chapter showed that people living alone spend more time in externally focused activities, such as work and leisure and dining with others but less time on activities at home and with household family. While the differences in mean time spent

are important, the question becomes do these times remain relevant when other demographic and occupational categories are taken into consideration. For the following analyses, the focus will be on how living alone and other social identities affect one's time at work, time at home – in housework activities and relaxation activities, and time with non-household members. Each analysis will begin by looking at whether living alone, sex, age, race, ethnicity, household income, and having a college degree are significant in predicting time use. I will then add workforce characteristics - occupation, shift, and whether one has an hourly position to the analysis to determine if those characteristics are relevant. Finally, where statistically significant, I show the interaction between living alone and sex, age, race, and ethnicity to determine if the combination of characteristics significantly impacts one's use of time.⁷ The omitted categories are not living alone, female, white non-Hispanic, no college degree, professional or managerial position, regular shift, and salaried workers. For each time category, the final model includes only those characteristics that are shown to be statistically significant.

Time Spent at Work

As Presser (2003) and others have shown, people are working more hours and more non-standard hours in today's 24/7 economy. However, these hours are not distributed equally. Researchers agree that individuals on the higher end of the economic and professional ladder work more hours while those on the lower ends are likely to desire more hours of work (Jacobs and Gerson 1998). Additionally, individuals in service industry positions often have varying works schedules with limited control over their time

⁷ I do not include interaction terms if those terms are not statistically significant.

while people with professional and managerial positions work more regularly scheduled day shifts albeit for longer hours. These distinctions hold true for individuals living alone as well.

My qualitative interviews reinforce the research, which shows that people in professional positions both have more control over their schedule but also work longer hours while people in retail and service positions have limited control over their work schedules. The interviews also show that people living alone feel they have more flexibility to work because of limited obligations in other realms. Yet, their discussions of work time differ between job position, shift, and other economic and demographic factors. Therefore, it is important to examine whether living alone is a factor determining one's time at work or if it can be attributed to other characteristics, such as sex, race, age, occupational class, or shift. The following linear regressions will provide insight into how much difference in time spent at work can be attributed to living single or those other factors.

Since whether one works a part-time job or a full-time job clearly impacts time use, I have split the regression analyses of work time into categories for full-time work and part-time work. Table 11 shows the results of these regression analyses for full-time workers. For full-time workers, the first model shows that living alone is a significant predictor of time spent at work and increases the time one spends at work by almost 17 minutes. Additionally, the regression shows a significant relationship between being male and one's working hours, with a 40.5-minute increase in time spent at work. The final demographic factor that is statistically significant is Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic individuals are predicted to work 20 minutes more than their non-Hispanic counterparts. I suspect that

Table 11: OLS Regression Results for Models Predicting Time Spent at Work for Full-Time Workers, Coefficients (Standard Errors)			
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Final Model
Adult Living Alone	15.55** (5.96)	15.67* (6.21)	16.78** (6.19)
Male	43.60*** (4.92)	40.17*** (5.59)	40.50*** (5.18)
Age	0.36 (0.25)	0.07 (0.27)	
Black	0.07 (8.04)	2.03 (8.35)	
Hispanic	14.10 (7.46)	19.06* (7.91)	20.57** (7.52)
Household Income	-0.42 (0.46)	-0.73 (0.50)	
College Degree	6.52 (5.16)	-4.95 (6.23)	
Service Industry Worker		-3.16 (10.12)	
Office Worker		-0.98 (7.09)	
Farming, Construction, or Production Worker		0.54 (8.61)	
Swing Shift (4p-12a)		23.58** (9.03)	23.62** (8.94)
Graveyard Shift (12-8a)		-3.15 (12.29)	
Hourly		-27.18*** (6.11)	-24.22*** (5.30)
Constant	309.66*** (12.83)	340.13*** (14.86)	331.00*** (4.77)
Observations	17896	16156	16156
R-Squared	.007	.008	.01
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05			
Robust standard errors in parentheses			

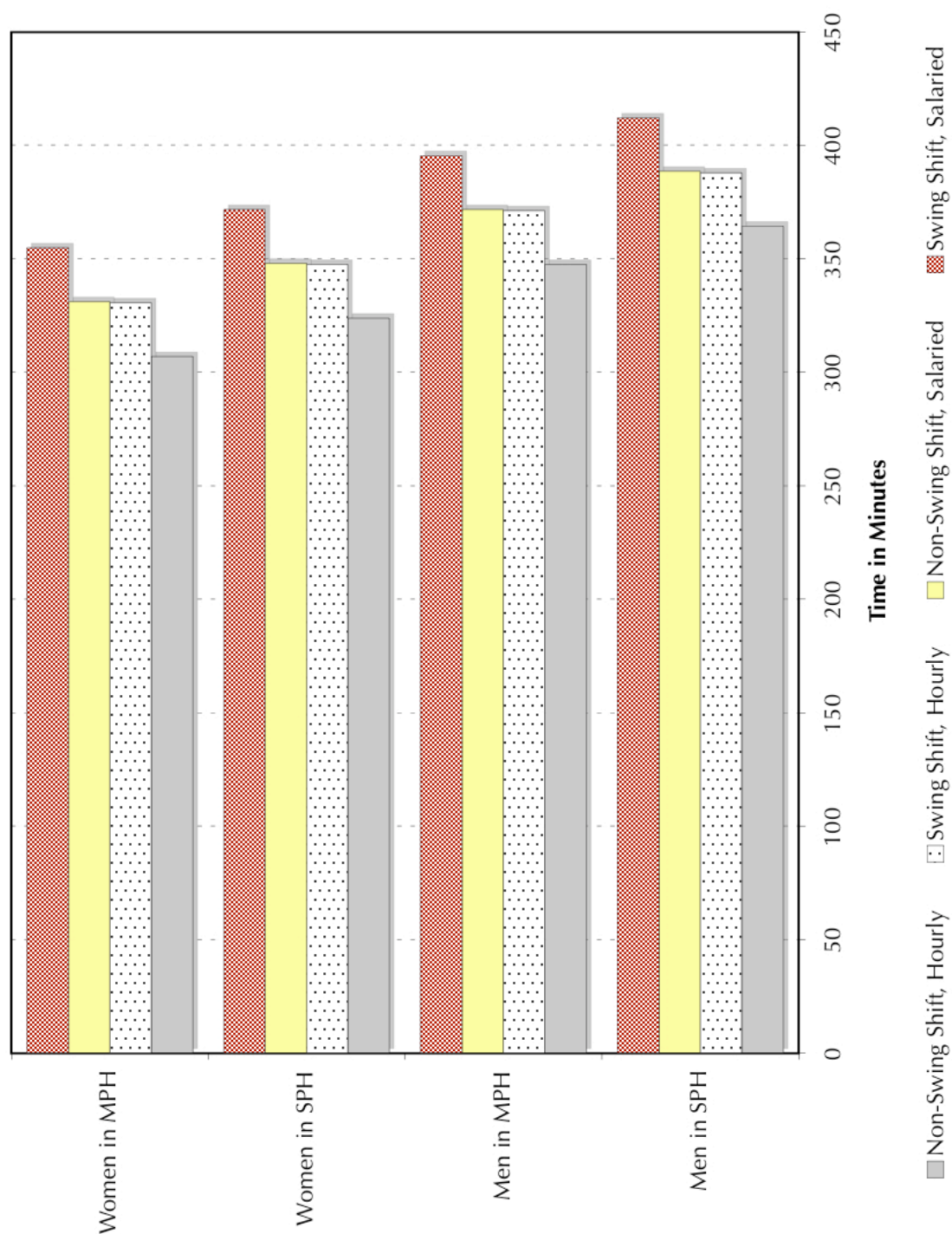
the significant impact of Hispanic ethnicity on time spent at work is related to the relatively high number of Hispanic individuals involved in the farm, construction, and production industries that may require longer working hours. According to the 2007 Current Population Survey, 37 percent of employed Hispanic individuals were involved in these industries. When a regression analysis was completed for only people living alone, Hispanic ethnicity loses its statistical significance suggesting that the increase of time at work for Hispanic individuals occurs in households with more than one individual⁸.

The only workforce characteristics that show significance in this regression are working a swing shift, which increases one's time by 24 minutes, and working at an hourly wage job, which decreases one's work time by 24 minutes. This analysis shows that living alone is a significant factor for the amount of time that full-time employees spend at work. However, even for individuals living alone, men continue to work almost three-quarters of an hour more than their female counterparts. Individuals in salaried positions who work during the afternoon and evening are particularly likely to work long hours. On the other hand, individuals in hourly wage positions will work fewer hours than their salaried counterparts. These findings provide further evidence that people in jobs that do not have strictly defined hours are more likely to work long hours than others.

Figure 4 provides a visual illustration of the predictions for full-time work time depending on one's household status, sex, work shift, and work type. The data shows that men living alone and working in salaried jobs during swing shift hours are expected to

⁸ I also completed regression equations using only the population of individuals living alone to determine if all the characteristics remain significant for this population. I only include the regression analysis for all living situations to show when living alone is important but will note when there are differences between the populations.

Figure 4: Predicted Time Spent at Work for Full-Time Workers based on Demographic and Workforce Characteristics



work the most hours while women in multiple person households (MPH) who work hourly during non-swing shift hours are expected to work the least number of hours. The data also show that people working hourly during swing shift hours work similar amounts of time to people working in salaried positions during non-swing shift hours. Overall, men continue to work more hours than their female counterparts but women in salaried positions who work during the afternoon and evening are expected to work more hours than their male counterparts who work in hourly positions during regular hours. It is clear that working late afternoon and evening hours whether in an hourly or salaried position as well as being in a salaried position during the regular work shift requires individuals, both men and women, to work longer hours.

The story for individuals who have part-time employment is a little different. Table 12 shows the significant factors in determining how much time individuals will spend at work part-time. The time one spends at work part-time cannot be predicted based on household type, sex, age, or race. Again Hispanic ethnicity has significant predictive power for how much time a part-time worker spends at work on an average day. Additionally, we see that working part-time at a service industry job and office job decreases the time spent at work by 30 minutes or more than working part-time in a professional job. On the other hand, working a swing or graveyard shift job increases the time spent at part-time work by 95 to 100 minutes. Nonetheless, these changes are significant for all household types and living alone does not change one's part-time working situation. Part-time workers who are willing to work in the late afternoon and evening or overnight are increasingly relied on to work more hours than those working part-time during the regular work day hours. However, people in service and office

Table 12: OLS Regression Results for Models Predicting Time Spent at Work for Part-Time Workers, Coefficients (Standard Errors)			
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Final Model
Adult Living Alone	13.68 (13.69)	-12.48 (15.26)	
Male	12.64 (11.64)	-3.68 (14.00)	
Age	0.34 (0.45)	0.70 (0.49)	
Black	8.70 (16.22)	4.79 (16.99)	
Hispanic	34.20* (16.00)	46.57** (16.44)	38.37* (15.52)
Household Income	-1.50 (0.89)	-1.73 (0.97)	
College Degree	14.98 (9.84)	18.38 (12.02)	
Service Industry Worker		-41.15** (14.84)	-35.81** (11.34)
Office Worker		-22.63* (13.95)	-30.77** (10.95)
Farming, Construction, or Production Worker		24.55 (20.00)	
Swing Shift (4p-12a)		120.88*** (15.18)	100.07*** (14.04)
Graveyard Shift (12-8a)		126.16*** (24.85)	94.69*** (25.14)
Hourly		19.11 (11.41)	
Constant	175.91*** (22.51)	157.59*** (27.31)	193.50*** (7.05)
Observations	3225	2542	3225
R-Squared	.005	.052	.034
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05			
Robust standard errors in parentheses			

positions, which are likely to be lower level positions, work fewer hours than their professional counterparts. Across all of these categories, Hispanic workers are working longer hours.

The similarities and differences between full and part time workers are telling. Since living situation, sex, age and race are not significant for part-time workers but living situation and sex are important predictors for full-time workers, the employment market appears to be a stronger predictor of work schedule for those working part-time than for those working full-time. Among full-time workers, occupation and shift may be less important than other characteristics.

Time in Household Activities

Gauging how much time an individual spends at work is only part of the equation for examining work-life balance. In addition to what impacts one's time at work, work-life balance must examine the necessities of maintaining a home and family. Issues, such as who does the housework in a dual career family, how do people find quality time to spend with partners and children, and what happens when there is a disconnect between one's real and ideal split between work and home activities, are the focus of much work-life balance literature. For individuals living alone, these questions are largely irrelevant; however, it is important to understand if people living alone spend their time completing household tasks or in leisure activities and if this time is similar to the time spent by others.

Within the realm of the home, there are two similar but separate types of activities – those activities that include management and maintenance of the home and those activities that involve leisure alone or with family members and personal care. While both

of these activities are focused on home and family, one is important to the maintenance of the home, self and family and the other is related to the enjoyment of one's time alone or with family. To examine how both types of activities are impacted by one's living situation and other characteristics, I have defined one group of activities as household maintenance activities, including, housework, purchases for the home and personal services as well as dining alone or with family members. Dining is a tricky category, in that it may be considered leisure in some dimensions. However, where eating alone may be seen as a respite from time spent caring for and socializing with others when an individual lives with partners and children, for individuals living alone it can just be a necessary part of daily living and not an obligation to others. On the other hand, for those living with others, dining together may be part of the daily routine and family maintenance rather than a leisurely activity. I chose to characterize the dining experience when alone or with household family members as part of family and self-maintenance rather than a leisure activity. In fact, most interviewees discuss eating as a side activity rather than the focus of their time. Therefore, rather than include dining with leisure activities, I group it with other household work activities.

The other types of activity that take place at home are personal care and leisure. These are activities are focused on self-care and relaxation and included in this category are leisure – watching television, reading, and other similar activities - when done alone or with household family members, personal care, and sports alone.⁹

⁹ Time spent sleeping is excluded because of the limited differences in time among individuals. Time spent in care activities for household children and adults is also not included, as people living alone do not take part in these activities.

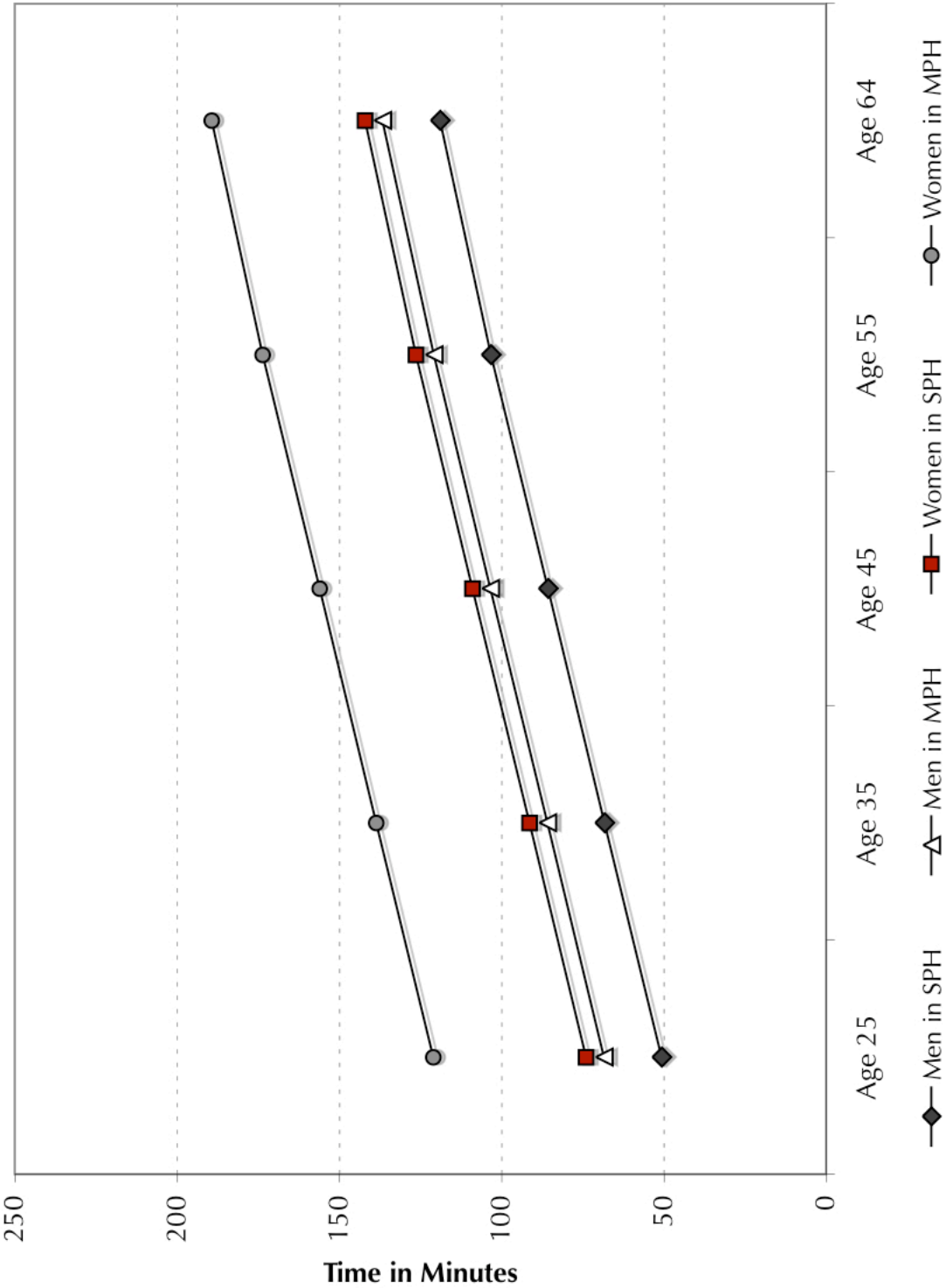
Table 13 examines the significant factors in predicting time spent on household maintenance. Similar to the analyses for work time, model one of the analysis of time on household maintenance activities shows the regression with only demographic characteristics and model two goes on to include workforce characteristics. Model 3 includes the significant interaction effects and the final model includes only those significant characteristics.

This analysis shows that living alone continues to be a significant predictor of time use on household maintenance activities. One's sex, age, race, household income, and the relationship between being single and male also prove to have significant impact on the time one spends creating and maintaining a home. With the final model, living alone decreases the time that someone spends on household maintenance activities by 47 minutes. Additionally, men spend almost 53 fewer minutes on household maintenance activities than women. This reinforces the research on housework that shows women do more housework than men. However, the significant interaction between being single and being male shows that men who live alone spend more time on household maintenance activities than they would if they lived with others. For people living alone, the gap in household maintenance time between men and women is significantly smaller than the gap between men and women in other households.

Figure 5 shows the differences in time spent on household maintenance based on sex and household type and age. As the graph shows, women spend more time on housework than men overall. The difference between men and women in single person households (SPH) is only about 20 minutes while the difference between men and women in multiple person households (MPH) is about 50 minutes across all age levels.

Table 13: OLS Regression Results for Models Predicting Time in Household Maintenance Activities, Coefficients (Standard Errors)				
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Final Model
Adult Living Alone	-32.18*** (2.78)	-28.57*** (2.84)	-44.07*** (12.64)	-47.16*** (3.91)
Male	-50.75*** (2.61)	-47.35*** (2.81)	-51.12*** (3.09)	-52.60*** (2.88)
Age	1.66*** (0.13)	1.77*** (0.13)	1.80*** (0.15)	1.75*** (0.13)
Black	-35.05*** (3.62)	-35.94*** (3.68)	-35.96*** (3.68)	-36.71*** (3.50)
Hispanic	-2.96 (3.94)	-4.31 (4.16)	-4.16 (4.16)	
Household Income	0.41 (0.23)	0.80*** (0.24)	0.79*** (0.24)	0.72*** (0.22)
College Degree	-1.89 (2.70)	3.54 (3.13)	3.55 (3.14)	
Service Industry Worker		11.83* (4.89)	11.48* (4.89)	11.45** (4.02)
Office Worker		0.85 (3.62)	0.64 (3.62)	
Farming, Construction, or Production Worker		4.14 (4.39)	4.27 (4.39)	
Swing Shift (4p-12a)		9.83* (4.99)	9.85* (4.98)	14.83** (4.85)
Graveyard Shift (12-8a)		12.05 (8.43)	11.42 (8.46)	
Hourly		5.61 (3.02)	5.33 (3.02)	
Single*Male			29.09*** (5.73)	29.44*** (5.35)
Constant	135.01*** (6.40)	110.11*** (7.20)	110.89*** (7.77)	121.04*** (6.11)
Observations	21995	18698	18698	21121
R-Squared	.051	.053	.054	.055
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05				
Robust standard errors in parentheses				

Figure 5: Predicted Time Spent on Household Maintenance by Living Situation, Sex and Age



Additionally, each year in age increases the time on household activities by a little less than 2 minutes. The increase in time spent on household activities is more than an hour from ages 25 to 64.

Along with the differences in sex and age, Table 13 shows that household income increases time spent on household maintenance activities by nearly one minute and working a swing shift increases time on household maintenance activities by 15 minutes. These differences are related to household living situations as people with higher household family incomes are likely to have larger homes, it may increase the time spend on household maintenance activities.

Similarly, individuals who work swing shifts in dual income couples may influence the increase in time spent on household maintenance among people working swing shift jobs. These individuals may work a swing shift in order to share household responsibilities with their partners or care for children. In fact, when the regression analysis is run for only people living alone, working a swing shift loses its significance, suggesting that the importance of swing shift work on household maintenance is only relevant to individuals living with others.

Like time spent on household maintenance activities, the regression analysis shows that individuals who live alone are expected to spend less time on household leisure and personal care activities than their counterparts in other household constellations, with almost 45 fewer minute spent on leisure at home as shown in Table 14. On the other hand, men spend 19.5 minutes more on household leisure and personal care than their female counterparts. Age continues to make a difference on time spent in household

Table 14: OLS Regression Results for Models Predicting Time in Household Leisure and Personal Care Activities, Coefficients (Standard Errors)				
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Final Model
Adult Living Alone	9.20** (3.34)	9.75** (3.39)	-30.51* (14.73)	-43.18** (13.53)
Male	17.15*** (2.65)	20.12*** (3.08)	22.40*** (3.36)	19.53*** (2.83)
Age	1.58*** (0.14)	1.55*** (0.14)	1.37*** (0.16)	1.37*** (0.16)
Black	35.54*** (4.77)	31.98*** (4.82)	31.88*** (4.81)	32.39*** (4.74)
Hispanic	-13.35*** (3.82)	-18.01*** (3.97)	-18.48*** (3.97)	-18.09*** (3.94)
Household Income	-0.62* (0.25)	-0.14 (0.27)	-0.14 (0.27)	
College Degree	-26.86*** (2.75)	-18.43*** (3.23)	-18.12*** (3.23)	-18.85*** (2.96)
Service Industry Worker		5.07 (4.74)	5.16 (4.73)	
Office Worker		3.45 (3.73)	3.38 (3.73)	
Farming, Construction, or Production Worker		-1.01 (4.92)	-1.11 (4.91)	
Swing Shift (4p-12a)		-26.13*** (4.84)	-26.19*** (4.84)	-25.65*** (4.83)
Graveyard Shift (12-8a)		-2.94 (9.21)	-2.34 (9.20)	
Hourly		17.38*** (3.21)	17.31*** (3.21)	17.42*** (2.97)
Single*Age			1.09*** (0.31)	1.23*** (0.30)
Constant	142.47*** (6.96)	124.68*** (7.92)	130.94*** (8.53)	132.44*** (7.91)
Observations	21995	18698	18698	18698
R-Squared	.031	.034	.035	.035
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05				
Robust standard errors in parentheses				

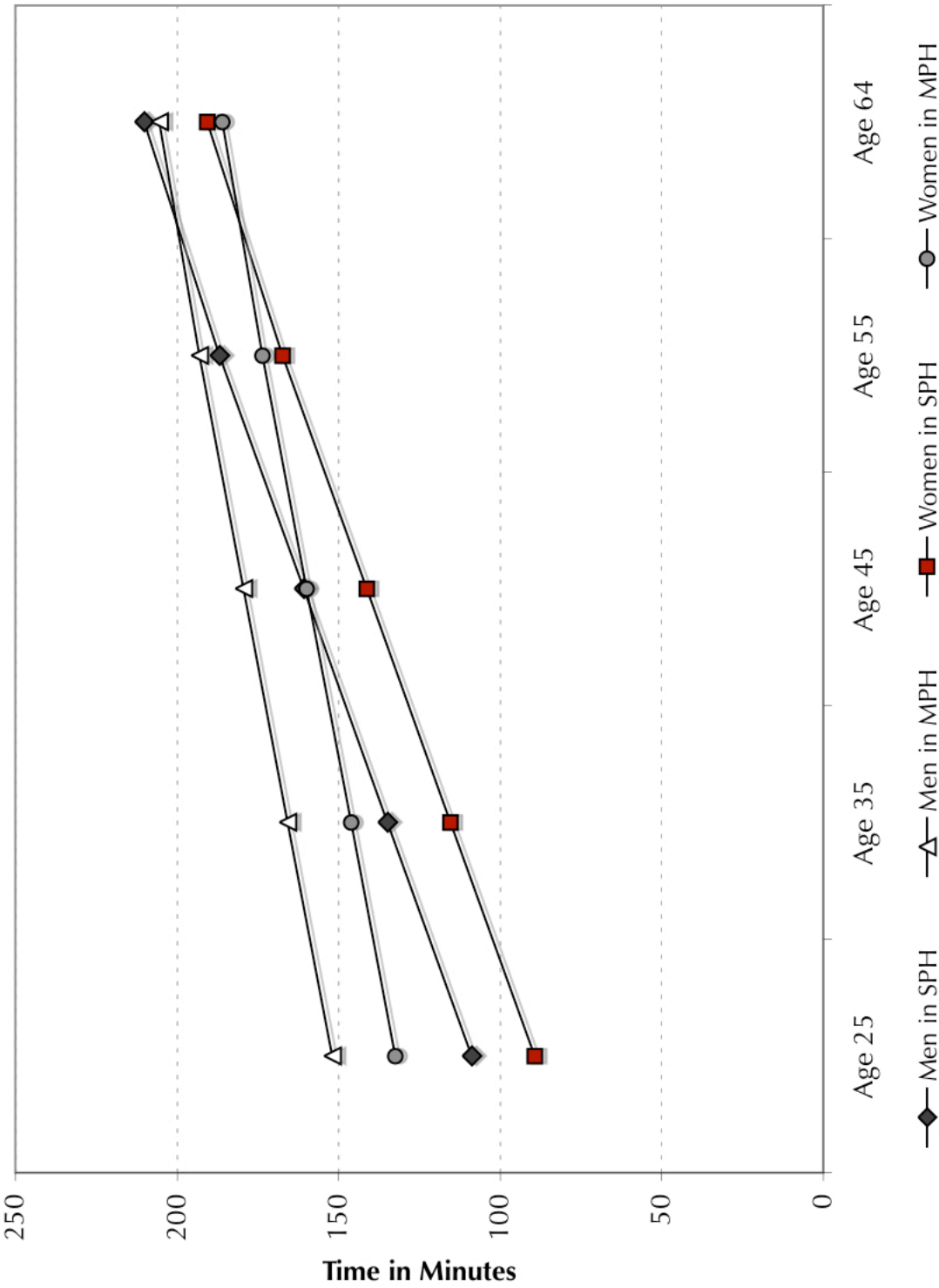
leisure with all people increasing their time spent by a little over a minute as they age and individuals living alone spent an additional minute on leisure with every year.

The analysis shows that Black individuals are likely to spend 32 minutes more on leisure and personal care than white non-Hispanic, which nearly offsets the 36 fewer minutes that Black individuals are expected to spend on household maintenance time. Hispanic individuals, on the other hand, spend 20 minutes less on household leisure time but do not spend any more time on household maintenance. In addition to sex, age, race and ethnicity impacting time spent on household leisure, having a college degree also leads to a decrease of close to 20 minutes in household leisure and personal care and working a swing shift decreases the time spent in household leisure by 26 minutes while working an hourly wage job increases time spent on household leisure by 18 minutes.

Looking at the regression analysis for only individuals living alone shows that again Hispanic ethnicity is not a relevant predictor for individuals living alone. Similarly, being male, having a college degree and working a swing shift are only predictors of time spent on leisure for individuals living with others. These characteristics may all be related to work schedule, meaning that those people working more hours are likely to spend less time on household leisure.

Figure 6 provides a visual account of the predicted differences for individuals in single person households (SPH) and those living with others (MPH) as they age. Individuals who live alone in their earlier years spend less time on household leisure or personal care activities. Around age 60, individuals who live alone are expected to spend more time on leisure activities at home than people who live with others. Since the American Time Use Survey is a cross-sectional data set, it is impossible to say whether

Figure 6: Predicted Time Spent on Household Leisure and Personal Care by Living Situation, Sex and Age



individuals who live alone begin to stay at home more as they age or if the data just suggests that people living alone in older age groups spend more time at home. We know that more people live alone as they get older, due to divorce and death. It may be that individuals who are newly members of single person households spend more time at home, while individuals who live alone across the life course continue to spend less time at home than others. Nonetheless, those individuals living alone in older age groups are more likely to spend time on household leisure and personal care than their counterparts in households with multiple individuals.

Time Spent with Others

The time people spend at work and at home also needs to be balanced with time in the community and with others. Patricia Voyandoff (2005) and others note that community can be a place for respite from the tensions between work and life. For individuals living alone, spending time with others or engaging in the community is also a space for development and maintenance of relationships similar to family maintenance in partnered and parenting relationships. Recent literature on intentional family, alternative household arrangements and friendship networks show how friendship relationships mirror the role of family in individuals lives but are also more varied than one's biolegal relationships. People engage with others as colleagues, acquaintances, friends, lovers, and non-sexual partners to support each other socially, emotionally, and sometimes economically (Muraco 2006; Roseneil and Budgeon 2004; Say and Kowalewski 1998; Weston 1991)

Table 15: OLS Regression Results for Models Predicting Time Spent with Others, Coefficients (Standard Errors)				
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Final Model
Adult Living Alone	28.45*** (3.47)	28.79*** (3.54)	101.78*** (16.43)	86.91*** (14.98)
Male	-4.09 (2.55)	-4.04 (2.87)	-3.27 (3.11)	
Age	-0.62*** (0.13)	-0.59*** (0.14)	-0.38* (0.15)	-0.45** (0.14)
Black	0.27 (4.43)	-6.35 (4.21)	-6.19 (4.20)	
Hispanic	-10.62** (3.88)	-11.17** (4.00)	-10.67** (4.00)	-11.20** (3.72)
Household Income	0.27 (0.23)	0.31 (0.25)	0.32 (0.25)	
College Degree	1.57 (2.66)	6.13 (3.16)	5.68 (3.16)	
Service Industry Worker		2.58 (4.89)	2.82 (4.89)	
Office Worker		-0.25 (3.64)	0.07 (3.64)	
Farming, Construction, or Production Worker		3.93 (4.42)	3.92 (4.42)	
Swing Shift (4p-12a)		-29.87*** (4.14)	-29.79*** (4.14)	-26.23*** (4.01)
Graveyard Shift (12-8a)		-19.91** (7.16)	-20.10** (7.17)	-21.03** (6.79)
Hourly Worker		3.66 (3.06)	4.05 (3.07)	
Single*Age			-1.54*** (0.33)	-1.33*** (0.31)
Constant	145.39*** (6.49)	139.80*** (7.45)	130.17*** (7.91)	141.77*** (6.43)
Observations	21995	18698	18698	21995
R-Squared	.006	.010	.011	.010
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05				
Robust standard errors in parentheses				

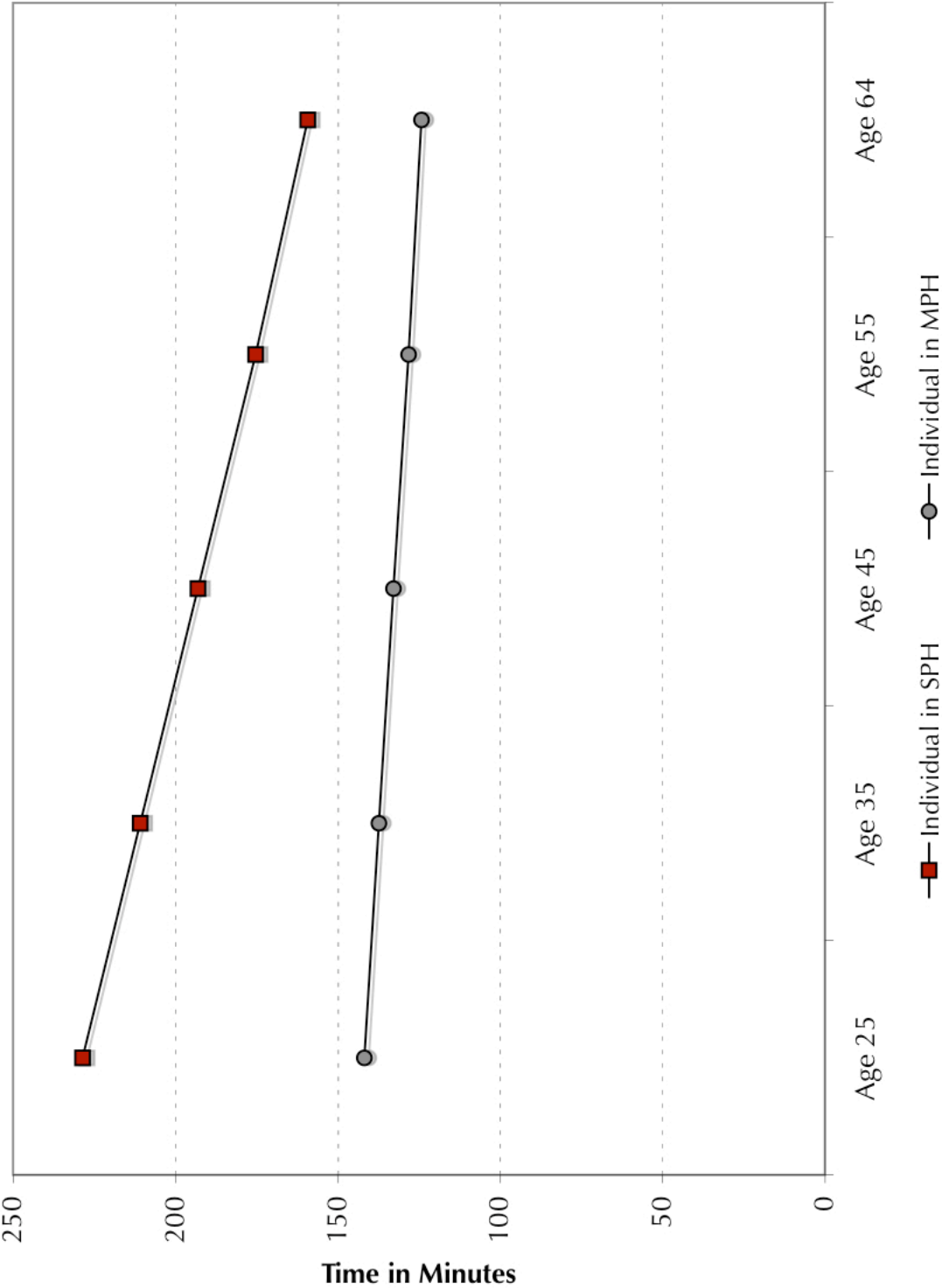
The earlier examination of mean times show that individuals living alone spend more time on dining and leisure activities with people outside their home than their partnered and parenting counterparts. For that reason, I aggregated time spent on social activities, dining and leisure with others, caring for non-household members and volunteer work into the category time with others. Table 15 shows that when looking at demographic characteristics related to predicting time spent with others, living alone, age and Hispanic ethnicity are significant factors in predicting time spent with others.

When employment characteristics are included, working a swing or graveyard shift job decreases the time spent with others. Additionally, there is a significant interaction between being single and age, decreasing the time spent with others by a little over a minute. The final significant factors for predicting time spent with others are living alone, age, Hispanic ethnicity, working a swing shift, graveyard shift, and the interaction of living alone and age. As with time at work and time on household leisure and personal care, when we examine the regression equation for only individuals living alone, Hispanic ethnicity loses its predictive power.

Living alone increases the time one spends with others by almost 90 minutes. For people living alone, this additional time spent with others is almost equal to the decreased amount of time that people living alone are expected to spend on household activities, both leisure and work. Additionally, Hispanic ethnicity decreases the time one spends with others by more than 11 minutes.¹⁰ Working a swing shift decreases time spent with others by 26 minutes while working a graveyard shift decreases time with others by 21

¹⁰ Again, Hispanic ethnicity loses statistical significance when examining only people living alone.

Figure 7: Predicted Time Spent with Others by Living Situation and Age



minutes. Finally, age also decreases one's time with others, particularly for people who live alone. With each year increase in age, the data suggest that individuals spend about half of a minute less with others but for people who live alone, there is an additional decrease in time spent with others by more than one minute (as seen in Table 15).

Figure 7 shows how these differences in age change over time for individuals living alone. This decrease in time spent with others in older age cohorts coincides with an increase in time spent at home in leisure activities and personal care as well as household maintenance. However, it only makes up for half of the increase in time spent on home activities. Even as older individuals living alone spend more time on activities in their home, they continue to spend time with others. Even at age 64, people living alone are predicted to spend more time with other people than their counterparts living in other household constellations. For all individuals, whether living alone or with others, the biggest decrease in time spent with others are related to working a swing or graveyard shift job.

Intersections and Identities

This analysis has shown that people who live alone spend their time differently than individuals in other living situations. Whether it is time spent at work, at home, or with others, living alone is a significant factor in predicting how much time one spends in various activities. Living alone predicts the largest difference in time spent with others; people living alone in their early years are predicted to spend almost an hour and a half more with others than people in multiple person households. This time does diminish in older age groups but people living alone still continue to spend 30 minutes or more with

non-household members at age 64. At the same time, people living alone spend more time at work and less time on household activities than their counterparts in multiple person households.

Not all individuals living alone experience their time in the same manner. As the previous analyses show, an individual's sex, age, race, ethnicity, and work situation all prove to have differing impacts on one's time. The different relationship to time dependent on one's social position help to understand that people living alone do not use their time in the same way as other individuals and all individuals living alone do not spend their time the same. These differences make a quantitative case that individual identity characteristics intersect to impact one's living situation.

Table 16 summarizes the information from the various regression equations to show which characteristics are significant for predicting time use at work, on household maintenance, on leisure and personal care, and time with others. Living alone and working a swing shift job are the only two factors that significantly predict differences in time use across all categories. Sex, age, and Hispanic ethnicity significantly predict time use differences in three of the four categories of time. However, in examining only the factors relevant for single person households, Hispanic ethnicity loses all statistical significance and working a swing shift loses its impact on time spent at home. The loss of statistical significance for Hispanics and swing shift workers when examining only single adults living alone suggests that these differences in the overall regression analysis are only present for individuals living with others and not those living alone.

Rather than suggesting a difference that is only related to a combination of one's sex, age, or living situation, the intersection between gender and living alone in relation to

Table 16: Significant Factors and Direction of Difference in Determining Time Use at Work, at Home, and with Others				
	Time at Work (Full-Time)	Time on Housework	Time on Leisure at Home	Time with Others
Adult Living Alone	+	-	-	+
Male	+ [^]	- [^]	+	
Single Male		+		
Age		+ [^]	+ [^]	- [^]
Single with Age			+	-
Black Non-Hispanic		- [^]	+ [^]	
Hispanic	+		-	-
College Degree			-	
Household Income		+		
Service Industry		+		
Swing Shift	+ [^]	+	-	- [^]
Graveyard Shift				- [^]
Hourly Wage Worker	- [^]		+ [^]	
[^] signifies characteristics that are statistically significant for the population of single person households only.				

household maintenance show that a man or woman who lives alone does not have the same experience as a man or woman who lives with others. Men who live alone increase

the amount of time they spend on housework relative to women living alone and women living alone decrease the amount of time they spend on housework related to women living with others. This leads to a smaller difference in the time men and women living alone spend on household work relative to their counterparts living with others but women still spend more time on household maintenance than men. Additionally, the intersection between age and living alone in relation to household leisure and time with others show that individuals who live alone but are older use their time differently than younger individuals who live alone as well as older individuals who live with others. Older individuals living alone spend more time at home and less time with others than their younger counterparts but still spend less time at home and more time with others than people living with others in the same age groups. These differences suggest that time use is not experienced in the same way by all people. Intersections among social identities lead to different outcomes in time use. Among people living alone, sex, age, and race along with time and workforce status impact one's use of time and how people manage time across categories.

Sex and Gender

Confirming much previous research, men continue to spend more time in the paid workforce than their female counterparts and women continue to do more work around the home. In looking at those who work more hours, much research has noted that the norm of an unburdened "ideal worker" leads to the expectation of an unwavering commitment to work among the professional class. Historically, these ideal workers have been white, professional men with wives to manage the household labor (Drago 2006;

Moen & Roehling 2004; Williams 1995). This norm continues to put pressure on individuals to work longer hours, particularly when they are not constrained by a time clock or outside obligations.

It would seem then that women living alone are available to contribute extra hours at work since they have fewer definite responsibilities outside of work. These women living alone are available to work as many hours as a man in the same situation. Nonetheless, while women living alone do work more hours than women in similar occupations and then men working more standard hours, they continue to work less than similarly situated men. These results show that gender still impacts one's time at work even when outside obligations are not clearly defined. Joan Acker (1990) and others point to the role that gender expectations and cultural norms play in who is expected to work longer hours and who is committed to work. Much of the disadvantage of women at work is associated with the expectation that women are responsible for more family work. However, these women living alone are not necessarily responsible for family work and as shown in the data, they do not spend 40 minutes more than their male counterparts on housework, leisure or social activities. Even when the time available to work is the same, one's sex and gender still impacts the time an individual spends at work.

Similarly, women do spend more time on household maintenance than men. However, the difference in time spent on household maintenance between men and women who live alone is only 20 minutes and the difference between men and women in others households is 50 minutes. This difference in turn comes from both a decrease in the amount of time spent on household maintenance by women living alone and an increase in the amount of time spent on household maintenance by men living alone. The old

argument that men have lower standards for household cleanliness cannot be measured not supported by this data but it shows that when living alone men take on much of the responsibility for home care that they do not undertake when living with others. This data suggests that women and men and women experience their time at home and at work differently. On the other hand, this analysis shows no statistically significant difference in the time that men and women spend with others.

Race and Ethnicity

In addition to differences in gender, race and ethnicity impact the time people spend on others activities. While the statistical significance of Hispanic ethnicity shows that for Hispanic individuals, more time will be spent at work and less time on leisure activities – at home or with others, these differences are largely connected to the differences for people who are living with others. When an analysis is completed of just individuals living alone, there is no significant difference between Hispanic individuals and others. This difference may be a result of fewer Hispanic individuals living alone and may also suggest that Hispanic individuals in multiple person households spend considerably more time at work than their counterparts in single person households.

On the other hand, race only impacts one's use of time in relation to the time spent at home. For both the analysis of all individuals as well as only those living alone, Black non-Hispanic men and women spend less time on household maintenance and more time on household leisure and personal care. There may be various factors that impact these differences, including the size of one's space and the shared commitment to housework. Orbach and Eyster (1997) suggest that housework is shared more equally among Black

couples which would decrease the amount of time Black women spend on housework relative to other women and then possibly increase the amount of time spent on household leisure and these differences may impact the overall trend of time spent on these activities for Black individuals regardless of gender. However, these differences are also statistically significant for individuals living alone, suggesting that it is more than shared responsibility impacting the time spent on household activities among Black individuals.

Education and Income

Differences in education and income also impact the time that one spends on household activities where individuals with a household degree spending less time on household leisure activities and an increase in household income leading to an increase in time spent on household maintenance. It is likely that both of these trends are tied to external factors as people with college degrees are more likely to be in salaried positions, which corresponds with more work hours. The increase in time spent on household maintenance is very small (less than 1 minute) with an increase of \$10,000 in household income, accounting for little difference in the overall time spent. However, this may be explained by an increase in the size of the space occupied by those with higher household incomes. If an individual has a larger home, it would increase the time spent on household maintenance. It may also be related to the number of people in the household as households with more than one member will have a higher income, especially if there is more than one worker and this may increase the time needed for maintaining the household. For both education and household income, the differences are only significant

within the total population but not when the regression analysis is completed for only individuals who live alone.

Age and Activity

Although college degree and household income are not relevant for the population of individuals living alone, age is a factor that is not only important for the whole population but gains importance among those living alone. The analysis shows that older cohorts of individuals spend more time at home, in both household maintenance activities and leisure and less time with others. This suggests that for people living alone in older age groups, there is a difference in the kinds of leisure activities that people want to undertake. While all individuals in older age groups spend more time at home than their younger counterparts, individuals living alone show a larger increase in time spent on leisure at home and a sharper decrease in time spent with others. This may be due to the social scene among younger adults where they are more likely to go out to bars and social events. Some of this difference may also be that younger people who live alone are involved in activities that allow them to couple up while other people living alone have either settled in to their lives as single adults or been coupled and split already and don't have the need or desire to be a part of the same social scene. My interviews confirm that individuals in older age groups are more inclined to spend time at home and not socialize as much. These differences seem to be a factor of settling down as much as social isolation. Many of the interviewees over 35 began to consider buying a home, which required more work but also provided a larger space for refuge.

It is also important to note that growing older does not lessen one's time in the community as much as if one works a shift job and none of those counteract the additional time spent on external activities by someone who lives alone. However, since more individuals living alone work in swing shift and graveyard shift jobs and work more hours, these job characteristics may be detrimental to the ability of individuals living alone to spend time with those outside the home.

Work Schedule and Time

While demographic factors largely impact the time spent at work, work schedule and workforce status also impact individuals differently. Interestingly, one's occupation does not directly seem to impact how much time an individual spends at work or in other activities, except for working in the service industry, which increases the time an individual spends on household maintenance.

The factors that have the most impact on one's time are those aspects most directly tied to one's time spent at work – working an off shift or for hourly pay. Those people working hourly generally work fewer hours because they are constrained by work schedule that is less fluid because companies are unwilling to pay over time and often limit individuals to fewer than forty hours a week. Individuals who work an hourly position are also more likely to spend more time on household leisure activities, suggesting that time not spent at work may be spent at home. These differences hold true for individuals living alone as well as the population as a whole.

Just as working an hourly wage job impacts one's time at work and home, working a swing shift also impacts the time one spends at work, at home and with others. People

who work in the late afternoon and evening work more hours but also spend more time on household maintenance while spending less time on leisure activities at home or with others. On the other hand, working an overnight - graveyard - shift does not lead to more time at work or at home but does lead to less time with others. For individuals living alone, both working a swing shift and a graveyard shift remain significant and lead to less time spent in activities with others. This suggests that people who work these hours miss time to socialize with a larger group of individuals as seen in Chapter 4. For people who live in household with partners, roommates, parents and even children, they have some built in social opportunities. For those individuals living alone, they may be the most at risk of social isolation due to a decrease in opportunities for social interaction.

Managing Life Alone

Through this analysis of the time use data, it is clear that living alone leads to a different experience of time than living with others. While this analysis also shows that other social identities, especially gender, race, and age, make a difference in how one spends his or her time and that when and how one works is an important characteristic, it is clear that living alone is an important aspect in organizing one's time. People living alone work longer hours and spend more time in activities with people outside their home while at the same time spending less time at home and managing personal and household needs. The balance between these categories is particularly difficult for those that work during the late afternoon and early evening hours because this is the time when more families are spending time on household activities and a higher percentage of individuals living alone are spending time with others. Therefore, when considering how people who

live alone manage their time, it is important to take into account one's social position in regards to gender, race, age, when one works to understand the time involved in maintaining a life alone.

CHAPTER SIX

AUTONOMY AND CONNECTION

The previous chapters have shown that people living alone spend their time differently than people living with others. They spend more time at work and more time with others on average. Additionally, people living alone work more late afternoon and evening hours and on the weekends. While the amount of time spent is different when living alone, the qualitative interviews suggest that time at work is largely similar in activity regardless of one's living situation. The place where these differences in time use manifest themselves is how people living alone think about and organize their time away from work. The interviews reveal similarities in the struggle to establish autonomy and maintain connections irrespective of differences in age, gender, race, and work schedule.

While much of the literature on family and work emphasizes a battle to balance time spent on work with time spent on childcare responsibilities, there is a growing body of research that suggests the debate between time at work and time at home is not just about finding time to do the important work of home but to enjoy other things as well (Meiksins and Whalley 2002; Voydanoff 2005). The desire for more flexible work hours may help individuals gain control over their work and engage with friends and others in the community. The ability to control their time is particularly important for people living alone as they do not have clearly defined responsibilities at home or in the community and must negotiate between their roles as individual, worker, friend, and family member.

Therefore, the ability to create a balanced life for people without shared households involves negotiating between fluid identities while being constrained through workplace and home obligations. Friendships often bridge the gap between home and work. While family serves to provide economic, emotional and physical support to its members, people living alone gain from friendships as much as family relationships. Additionally, individuals have varying degrees of engagement with friends that can provide support in multiple situations but also require different degrees of involvement (Allan 2009; Spencer and Pahl 2004, 2006).

Individuals living alone make a concerted effort to construct autonomous lives while living alone but also work hard to create relationships with many others. The interview data suggest that people enjoy their time alone and create their home as a place of relaxation and refuge while not focusing too much energy on home maintenance. While people living alone create fulfilled and independent lives, they struggle with what it means to be autonomous. At the same time, individuals strive to maintain their connection to others because they recognize the importance of family and friends to their own well-being, their obligation to others, and for the enjoyment of time spend with people.

Constructing Autonomy

Individuals living alone have flexibility in their work lives but rather than being focused entirely on their work lives, they also have obligations to themselves and others in the time spent outside of work. Little has been written about how people without partners manage the time spent at home but the quantitative data shows that less time is spent at home. During the time they spend at home, people living alone spend the time

establishing their autonomy. This desire to establish autonomy is shown through the ways that people living alone express their enjoyment in being alone and ability to create and control their space in ways that suit their needs and desires. Enjoyment of time alone and time at home along with creation of one's space is necessary for living self-sufficiently while alone.

Enjoying One's Time

People living alone largely express their enjoyment of time alone whether it is watching television at home or being out and about. Home can be a place for relaxation and rejuvenation and being alone can provide a refuge from the drama of family and friends. Even when out in public, being alone allows individuals living alone to experience life without needing to be with others at all times. James recently took a vacation to Mt. Rushmore alone. While he has a girlfriend, she lives in another town and is busy with school, but he had no problem going on his own. James reports:

So I'm really trying to see a lot of the country, that's my goal ... Different kind of culture in South Dakota. It was like seeing the bison out there. Pretty cool. Went to the Badlands, that was nice. So it was a good opportunity to do that.

My girlfriend being so far away that kind of perpetuates [going alone] as well because she is in Cincinnati, so just kind of hard for her to do. She had class. But my thing is I'm kind of a loner in some ways too. I'm not necessarily important that have to be with people to actually have a good time. The experience is important to me. So I'm always trying to experience new things. So that's really what I've been trying to experience new things and have an opportunity to take advantage of the world. My car is in pretty good shape so I can drive. If it can get me there, I'll do it. So I'm really trying to do a lot more of that. Traveling more. I spend money on that (James, 30).

As James acknowledges here, he does not need to spend time with others to gain new experiences and enjoy himself, in fact, he notes that he need only to rely on himself to get out and see the world.. During his trip, he says that he did not make an effort to interact with people he met along the way. "I talked to people a little bit. I was really alone. I didn't make any major efforts like, 'Hey I want some people to go out with.'" Others also note that they also value their time alone. Dee has lived alone since college and says, "I really appreciate and value my space and my time." As Dee prepares to move in with her boyfriend, she notes the importance of maintaining her own space:

That's definitely going to need a large place, like three bedroom. Because he was thinking, "Hey we can..." Don't even finish that phrase because we need to be able to be home but still have our space. Because even though I think I need my alone time more than him, I think that he underestimates the amount of alone time he is going to need. And you don't want to have to leave your home to have that space (Dee, 30).

Even Dee realizes that having some time and space to herself when living with someone else is important to enjoying her life and her autonomy. Dee is not the only one who recognized that one's own space is important even when in a relationship. When asked about how he felt about living alone, Steve, who was previously married, said:

Oh I like it. I like it. Even after the divorce I had two what I would call serious relationships after that. And in both the question of moving in together came up. And in both I vetoed it. "I'm not interested. Tell you what, we could buy a two family house. You could have the upstairs and I get the downstairs or if you prefer the downstairs, I'll take the upstairs. But I want my own space and I want the ability to say I'm done and close the door and I'll see you tomorrow if need be." And even when I was with my ex wife, both places we lived, I had my own bedroom theoretically. We slept together every night but I had my own room that was my own space (Steve, 50).

Steve recognizes that his own space was important to his enjoyment and his autonomy whether in a relationship or alone. The enjoyment of being alone is something

that individuals living alone regularly articulated. Some of that enjoyment comes from the ability to entertain oneself and some comes from the freedom from negotiating with others.

Mia notes both sides of being autonomous when talking about what she does alone:

I'm very comfortable being alone. And I have a lot of creativity. And I just like hanging out with my own company! I hang out with my cats and I watch TV. I read a lot. I go stuff. Like if I want to do something, go see a show or see an exhibit, I just do it for myself. And I don't mind not being with somebody all the time. So I like the freedom of being by myself and really not having to consult anybody else. I really like that, which makes me half curious about how I would handle marriage if that ever happens! (Mia, 33).

While Mia notes that being alone and not consulting with anyone is key to her enjoyment of life alone, she also talks of her concerns about negotiating time from the perspective of someone who has lived alone for some time. Jack, who works in the interactive service industry, worries less about "consulting" with others and sees the opportunity to control his own time and interactions as an important break from his regular work schedule:

You know pretty much it's working because that's where I spend the majority of my time. And that's where the most random people will come in. I don't want to go out and try to meet people. That never works. And if I have days off, I don't want to be around people half the time because I want to be able to control my own environment. I don't want people playing music I don't want to hear. I don't want people yelling at me. I don't want to entertain people and be in a conversation that I could care two shits about. So definitely I will meet people at work because when I'm not at work I'm generally headed some place, or doing exactly what I want to do, which is not be around people (Jack, 31).

Jack shows how one's work environment helps to delineate his time outside of work but also that it is important for him to be able to control his own environment when alone. However, he also recognizes that his work schedule and need for time away from

people after work, means that he meets most of his friends at work. Jack is creating his own balance between work and home but also finding time for meeting friends.

Enjoyment when spending time alone is one way that individuals living alone talk about their own autonomy and the enjoyment of their space. Time alone at home also provide a needed space for rejuvenation after spending time at work and with others. Being with others and keeping busy away from home can be tiring and when living alone, a break to just spend time alone can provide important space to recharge. Jolene discusses her joy in having a weekend with no outside obligations:

I like being at home. I don't have any problems curling up on my sofa and watch TV, read a book, play on the computer. I try to create a little oasis there for myself, which I like. Sometimes when you're just running, running, running, if you're busy every weekend... there was one point this summer where every weekend I was away from home. This overnight trip or that overnight trip or visiting someone over there. And then just to have a whole weekend where it could just be me reading the paper down in the courtyard and relaxing was a dream (Jolene, 43).

As Jolene shows, enjoyment of her time alone provides a respite from obligations to work and others. The ability to recharge at home is an idea expressed by most interviewees. Sometimes, convenience is the key to being able to relax and establish one's autonomy. This struggle for time and energy and reliance on convenience is evident in the eating habits of many adults who live alone. Mary notes that she enjoys eating what is quick so that she can enjoy her place:

But I live down the street from a Giant so a lot of times I just run in the evening and pick something up for dinner. But I hate doing that too because that takes so much time. I'd rather just sit in front of the TV and eat my peanut butter (Mary, 40).

Part of creating one's space is having the time to enjoy it, for Mary and others eating something quick and convenient in front of the television is easier to manage than

trying to prepare a meal for herself. Others also express the need to eat quickly when between events. James says that he usually “eats on the go” as he moves between his fulltime job and a t-shirt business he runs with his brother. Becca trains for marathons in the summer after work and while she might cook if she were home more, she says:

No, because I’m never home. I’m never around to really cook. By the time I get done running it’s like 8:30-9 o’clock. You don’t want to make a big meal. You don’t have time for that. So I’ll make a sandwich or have a bowl of cereal. It’s too late by the time I... nobody wants to eat at 10 o’clock (Becca, 31).

Becca notes that her schedule makes it difficult for a full meal and therefore she will eat something convenient while she relaxes. For the people whom I interviewed, dining alone and, especially preparing a meal is often a chore that takes more energy than they wish to expend and takes away from the time to enjoy their own space. Most interviewees discussed having cereal, crackers, and take out for dinner when time and energy did not provide the motivation for a “real meal” even when they realize, as Kelli does “I prefer to cook my own meals versus take out or I just feel healthier and feel better when I do my own cooking.” Yet, Kelli also notes that when her schedule is particularly busy or she is tired, she will eat whatever is convenient. With busy schedules and no others to help, individuals living alone often see eating alone as a chore that needs to be completed and therefore, spend less time in planning and preparing the meal but rather eat what is convenient while doing other things.

For people living alone relaxing at home is important to the establishment and enjoyment of one’s autonomy. Rick talks explicitly about the disadvantages and advantages of living alone and having that time to restore one’s energy:

I like living alone, despite the fact that I have to maintain everything, clean everything, cook, take care of myself and bring in the money. The benefits of having everything done my way and not having to compromise and just having a refuge from everything, my home is my refuge and my place...Like the little thing that you put your phone on to recharge, that's my condo. That's my home alone, my ability to recharge. And I think that you really have to love the person you're living with to be able to recharge when you live with somebody else. That person needs to be something that helps you recharge. And I think to me another person doesn't help me recharge. Solitude helps me recharge (Rick, 48).

Rick points out that he needs his time alone to recharge and that he really enjoys that space but does not think he would be able to recharge if someone else lived with him. Rick chooses to live alone because he enjoys his space and his solitude. The enjoyment of one's space can also provide a reprieve from the drama that sometimes comes with being with others.

While most individuals discussed spending holidays with family or friends, some individuals find that being alone during the holidays can be pleasurable because one does not have the stress of worrying about others. Taylor notes that one Thanksgiving he was invited to a friend's house but it fell through when his friend got sick and that worked well for him. He expresses a similar feeling about Christmas:

Well what was going to happen was I was actually going to [my friend's] family for dinner. But she came down with an illness, so I brought dinner to her. And by and large that's what happens to me for Thanksgiving. I get invites to other people's interaction, other people's friends. I had three invitations for Thanksgiving and that just happened to be the first one to say it. So she was first in the stack, she wins. If I had my druthers I would probably spend it mostly alone. I actually preferred the way it worked out this year for me. Mainly because I find family events stressful, especially other people's family. They're very draining so I tend to avoid them. Christmas the same. I actually actively take Christmas off. I do not go out on Christmas day period. And stop. I spend the whole day alone. I usually stock up on food. I don't even get dressed. That's my day. I spend the day in quiet reflection of my year (Taylor, 32).

As Taylor notes, he finds holidays stressful and instead chooses to spend that time alone. His holidays alone are less stressful and more enjoyable; he prepares in advance and sees it as his own time. Similarly, Rick was invited to spend Thanksgiving with a friend's family but declined the offer:

So I actually took a pass and spent Thanksgiving alone. But I wasn't alone because I was with my dogs. But I actually have spent holidays alone. I've spent Thanksgiving alone, Christmas alone and I've spent my birthday alone and I have no problem with that. I love spending time alone. It's like time to recharge. And I especially like holidays, like how Christmas holiday, especially if there's snow on the ground, is a great time to go walking through Lincoln Park. It's beautiful. And if there's freshly fallen snow that hasn't been trampled, and it is just a beautiful landscape. And so Thanksgiving and holidays alone are really not that bad (Rick, 48).

While the holidays are often seen as a time for connecting with others, spending the holidays alone can provide a time to reflect and enjoy one's space and time. Rick, Taylor and others express that living alone provides a refuge from stress of holidays with others and allowed them to enjoy their autonomy.

Individuals living alone spend time alone at home but also spend time alone in public spaces. Like James, who vacationed on his own, people who live alone often spend time in public places as a way to relax by themselves. Being alone in public places allows individuals living alone to enjoy the things around them without needing to rely on others.

Becca recalls that she enjoys being alone:

I will wander around the zoo. I'll go for a walk by myself. I like photography so I'll take my camera down there and take pictures. I have no problem going to a movie by myself on a Sunday afternoon (Becca, 31).

As Becca notes, she enjoys her time alone but she also has a plan to engage herself while alone. With camera in hand or a movie to watch, Becca is going out with a plan and not just randomly wandering through the zoo alone. While people living alone enjoy

spending time alone at home or out in public, there is a need to have something to do when out in public alone. Brian expresses a similar sentiment, saying that he enjoys going to the many brunch restaurants in his neighborhood but brings with him something to keep him occupied without the need for social interaction. Brian notes:

So I like to go to those places and chill out. Read the newspaper usually. I'm by myself most of the time. So just read the newspaper, bring a magazine or a book or something and just chill out for a moment, relax (Brian, 31).

His time alone in public is a time to relax. Living alone does not stop him from enjoying the brunch options in his neighborhood but he also brings along something to do while out at brunch. Without a clearly defined role as a member of a family or couple, people living alone often found it helpful to have a focus for their time while out in public. Even when enjoying their autonomy, having a something specific to do helped define their own roles when out in the community. Through time alone in public or private, individuals living alone construct autonomy that involves enjoyment, relaxation, and rejuvenation.

Making a Home

To fully establish their independence and enjoy their time alone, people in single person households also create spaces for themselves. While individuals living alone express their enjoyment of time alone, they also note that having their space in order helps to enhance that enjoyment. Jolene notes that she enjoys her time alone but expresses particular relief that there are welcome occasions where nothing pressing needs to be done, saying that one on good day:

And I think I took a nap and I just totally relaxed. My house was clean so it looked beautiful. It wasn't like I had any obligations. I did some dishes, some laundry and it was just very relaxed. No pressure. I watched part of Harry Potter. I really enjoyed that (Jolene, 43).

Jolene shows that she could really enjoy her own space when she did not have other obligations and her house was clean. Similarly, Margaret expresses the importance of having others things under control when she was preparing for a day alone at Christmas:

Well it was probably Christmas day because I saw my family Christmas Eve and Christmas Day was a complete freebie. So I had already planned ahead for it. It wasn't spontaneous. I'd rented a couple of movies and made sure I had food in the fridge. I said, "I'm not putting on my shoes today at all." And that's what I did (Margaret, 41).

Much like Rick and Taylor earlier, Margaret was able to relax on Christmas Day after spending the previous day with family. To enjoy that time, she prepared herself by getting movies and food. Not only did she not have to worry about chores and her space but she had also already talked to important people in her life and arranged for her own entertainment. Others also spoke of wanting to get other activities done in their space in order to relax. Brian notes that when he comes home from work:

I'm a little tired from work but I come home with a plan. "OK. Got to e-mail these friends and take care of these bills and all that stuff." (Brian, 31).

Brian notes that he feels the need to get things done when he gets home from work so that he can relax. The need to take care of one's household bills as well as responsibilities to others is important for people living alone as they create their own space and establish their autonomy. Brian goes on say that he does not always finish all of his tasks because he just wants to rest after a long day at work. The need to rest after work often hinders the ability to get all of one's chores completed.

Simply finding the time and energy to find to maintain one's space is an important factor. For people living alone, and in particular those working multiple jobs or off hours, this can be particularly daunting. Lisa, who works two hourly jobs, recognizes that her place is not as neat as she would like but feels constrained by her job:

I have a studio that's a pigsty because I'm going around to different jobs, come home, crash and that's it. So I haven't really had a chance to appreciate and respect that space (Lisa, 28).

Lisa acknowledges that she wants to create a relaxing space at home but that her own energy level leads to less time on her own space. Gina, on the other hand, is working only part-time while she looks for another full-time position and sees not only the additional time as a benefit to housekeeping but also her energy level based on job satisfaction. When asked how her time was different during this transitional period, she says:

I cook more. I've actually been better at cleaning. Like when I'm working full time, especially it's sort of hard because I knew I was unhappy at my job but you never know you're as unhappy... I mean I was miserable. And I would come home and I wouldn't be up for doing anything. I wouldn't be in the mood to clean or cook necessarily. I'd just sit on the couch and watch TV (Gina, 34).

Gina notes that her energy level is impacted by her satisfaction at work and that she is better able to maintain her space with more time and energy. Creating an autonomous space comes with the sole responsibility of maintaining one's own needs and the needs of one's space.

While it may, at times, be difficult to find the time to keep up one's space when living alone, there is a benefit to being able to maintain that space however one wants.

When living alone, people can keep their space in whatever shape they want without worrying about someone else. On the most basic level, Taylor puts it best:

Compromise goes away when you're living alone. You don't have to compromise with anybody about anything ever. If you want to sit there in a pile of candy wrappers, more power to you! It's your place, you do what you want. But yeah, it's a control standpoint. It's my space. You can't screw with it (Taylor, 32).

Taylor notes that part of living alone means controlling one's own space which is important when creating a home alone. Taylor's comment reinforces a notion that individuals who live alone are not accountable to others. A common thread in discussing living alone is the ability to keep one's house in whatever shape wanted - often messy. This stereotype is especially true for men living alone. But, many of the men interviewed, note that they are very tidy. In fact, Jack worries about his neatness. "I've got a problem with I'm very anally clean. Like OCD clean. Everything smells like bleach. People come over, 'Do you even live here?' I mean it's very, very clean." Jack, by his own assertion does not conform to the notion of the slovenly male. Tom simultaneously reinforces the stereotype of a messy bachelor as he challenges the notion of being "an average dude" himself.

Sometimes I'm very, very clean and tidy. A lot of times I'm not. So I'm in a studio. It's like a two room with a closet. So for a while I was recycling cardboard which really means I was just piling it up in a corner because I felt guilty about throwing it away. So I have a bunch of cardboard in the corner that I need to throw away. I have a lot of papers stacked up in different places. Like old receipts or retirement business. It's all in a big pile. I don't sweep a lot. I think I'm pretty clean for the average dude. But still I'm not super clean. I'll clean my bathroom maybe once a month. I clean the important parts more often obviously but as far as like big spring cleaning, I don't ever really do that. I keep a lot of junk that I don't need and old boxes and stuff like that (Tom, 37).

Tom recognizes that there are things he may not need to keep but no one is putting limits on him and things pile up. The comments of Tom and others show that as individuals living alone, they may create their own space and keep it as clean or messy as wanted without the limits of someone else's standards. James notes that living alone makes it important for him to keep things in order in case someone just wants to stop by:

I'm really neat so I never have to do, my house is never dirty. I wouldn't say never dirty. But I take off clothes, I hang them up. So it's never like clothes everywhere ... I'm like a person that cleans on the go ... before I sit down to actually eat dinner, all the dishes are done except the plate and to pots. All the little dishes, the counter, all that is usually cleaned off. It's hard for me to eat when things are still in disarray. So I kind of clean as I go. I cut my hair once a week so every time I cut my hair I clean the bathroom. So the bathroom gets cleaned every week. So cutting my hair is messy and I clean it right after I cut my hair. That gets done every week. The kitchen of course I keep dishes done. I don't cook every week but I try to cook at least once a week. Sometimes it's tough so sometimes every two weeks. Kind of depends. I keep dishes up so they don't pile up in the sink, especially when you're alone. My living room has to stay neat because you never know who is driving by or who wants to stop by. I need to have my place kind of together so I keep that pretty neat. I'm a minimalist I would say so there's not a lot of random whatnots. I try not to have random stuff so everything has a purpose and place ...it never gets too out of whack. I keep it up as I live, so that keeps everything together as far as cleaning (James, 30).

James notes that he is able to create his home just as he would like. As someone who lives alone, he is able to give each thing its own place and not worry about someone else's priorities, organization system or stuff. Individuals recognized that one's level of household maintenance is about having autonomy and control over one's own space. While they confessed some sense that housework was done for other people, most stressed that in the end they are accountable to themselves alone.

It's like I never have to do anything for anybody else either. But any time I'm doing something it's because I want to. Sometimes I'm cleaning up

because I really should because somebody is coming over. But not usually (Gina, 34).

Gina shows that she is able to maintain her space for herself and not for someone else. The benefit of creating one's own space is particularly evident among those singles living alone that had previously lived with someone else. Those individuals saw the benefit of not needing to compromise on household maintenance. Rick noted that he largely kept his place neat but felt there were compromises he had to make when living with his partner that he does not have to make now.

It's too much work. And I like to have things my way. And if I'm indecisive and I want to leave something in the middle of the floor until I figure out where to put it, I want to leave it in the middle of the floor. And I don't want somebody complaining about it (Rick, 48).

Rick notes that he is able to decide for himself where how to decorate and does not have to make a decision on where to put things immediately because they will not be in someone else's way. Additionally, Margaret, who was married previously, mentioned the difference between maintaining one's space when living with someone else and living alone. Predominantly, she noted that living alone has made her more protective of her own space:

Everything is where I put it. When I put something down and leave, I come back, it's still there. It's not having to clean up after someone else. If it's my own mess, it's my own mess. It's just privacy and quiet when I want it. I don't have to consider someone else's needs when I want to make a change and get rid of something or if I want to get something new (Margaret, 41).

Margaret notes that she is able to create her space just as she likes. It is her mess and her responsibility. This ability to maintain one's space is part of the creation of a home alone that helps to establish an individual's autonomy. Establishment of autonomy

and the creation of a home alone also mean that people living alone may live in smaller places than those who live with others.

Many individuals noted that the amount of space they could afford based on one income could be constraining but it also required less maintenance than a bigger space. Becca, a 31-year-old advertising executive, notes that she has lived in the same studio apartment for many years and has considered moving to a larger place but finds that she has “less to clean but you only have so much room for your stuff.” As a single adult, she feels both constrained by her space but grateful for the benefits of having a smaller space.

At the same time, those who could afford larger living spaces tended to live in places that required less overall maintenance work for people living alone, where they could rely on others for major maintenance problems and general external upkeep. Amanda moved into a new space that “has the modern conveniences. If something breaks there’s a 24/7 number I can call to get something fixed.” She also notes that her new place has central air which means dust accumulates less than before and she can go longer without dusting. Kelli expresses a similar sentiment when asked about her household responsibility:

I guess just usual renting stuff. My main responsibility is just to make a phone call if something is not working right. So aside from just cleaning and organizing, I don’t really have a lot that I have to maintain. And that’s a conscious decision. That’s one of the drawbacks personally in buying a house. At one point I even went through a first time homebuyers program and there’s the financial piece of laying out, but there’s also just caring for one. And I don’t think I want that responsibility. Things are hard enough. Why would I want to have to have a lawn mower and trim the shrubs and fix the roof? Get a new water heater. I don’t want to have to deal with those things (Kelli, 35).

As Kelli recognizes, she makes a conscious choice to live in a space that requires less work. To create a space on her own, she has chosen to live in a place that does not saddle her with the need to be responsible for the ins and outs of household maintenance. This was a sentiment expressed by many living alone. To create a home on one income and with one person to do the chores, people would chose smaller and more convenient spaces to live.

Through creation of spaces that are convenient and maintaining their own space, individuals living alone work hard to construct autonomy. They find enjoyment in their time alone, are rejuvenated by their space, and organize their own time and space. Yet, the quantitative data show that people living alone spend less time at home. This is supported in the qualitative interviews, which suggest that people living alone feel tensions with their autonomy and also spend time with many different people when not at work.

Tensions with Autonomy

While people living alone spend more time with non-household members, on average, than individuals with partners or children, they also must make concerted efforts to build these connections. With the sole responsibility for creating lives on their own and the need to reach out to others for support and help, people living alone sometimes struggle with their own autonomy and their connections with others.

When living alone there is the benefit of maintaining one's own space and spending quality time alone but even those who truly enjoy living on their own note that it is sometimes difficult to be alone. Jolene, who asserts that she is "never living with anyone ever again," also recognizes that there are disadvantages to living alone. She says:

Well, I have had really bad days when I live alone. And it's when you're lonely. You make some calls and nobody is available. But you just don't feel like going out for a walk. So it's not just to see people, but you're just looking for company and you just don't have any. I mean that is probably it for me (Jolene, 43).

As Jolene points out, the biggest problem in living alone is not having someone around when she feels lonely. While Jolene particularly misses interpersonal interaction when she has had a bad day, Thad notes that it is nice to have someone around for positive reinforcement and to keep him engaged with others. He notes:

I think finding the motivation to stay engaged. Like I would love to come home and start reading. Just read, rather than turn on the TV and just kind of rotting slowly. But there's not that encouragement. So it's very easy for me to give myself permission to do whatever because it's alone. As opposed to having somebody there saying, "Hey we were going to do something else tonight. Or tonight was our night to read." So there's not that reinforcement of the positive things. It just comes down to me. And so good or bad or otherwise, that's what it comes down to (Thad, 28).

For Thad and others, having someone around helps to provide structure to his time so that he does not become too isolated from others. Thad remembers his live-in girlfriend who provided some structure to his time outside of work. Worrying about being too disconnected from others, he misses role that having a live-in partner plays in developing and maintaining connections. In constructing autonomy, individuals living alone struggle with their need for intimacy and support, fears of personal safety and their future, and being responsible for all the decisions. At the same time, distance from friends and family and the difficulty in making friends as one gets older constrain the ability people have to develop relationships.

Wanting Intimacy

People who live alone enjoy the freedom that their autonomy gives them but also recognize that it is important to have intimate personal relationships. Many individuals noted that they liked being alone but did not like being lonely. Being lonely was attributed to a lack of close personal relationships, especially when feeling down. This type of personal connection is seen as one of the sacrifices for the freedom of living single.

Discussing the sacrifice she sees in being single, Mia recalls:

I think the sacrifice of being single is quite a few things I think are really important to human beings. One is the connection of day-to-day interaction with somebody who just knows your routine and there is an intimacy in the little things. And so that type of intimacy I think is really, really special and very important in terms of feeling connected to another person. And you don't necessarily have to be married to feel that. But for me, I think the level of commitment with that intimacy is just much more important. So I think it can exist when you're dating somebody and then just grow and mature. But I also think once you're married, it grows and matures in a way that you just really can't imagine as a single person. So I think when you're single you miss out on that intimacy. And I think you miss out on things like touch and human connection, just physical connection that are so important just to our spirit. That's really hard. It can be very lonely to be single, which is different from being alone. Like I'm very comfortable being alone but I hate being lonely (Mia, 33).

Mia notes that she feels that being alone does not provide her with an important social and physical connection to others. Taylor expresses similar feelings and realizes that he may maintain intimate relationships longer than he should because of a desire for physical intimacy in a comfortable way that is beyond spending time with friends. He points out:

I tend to throw myself into dating relationships more quickly than I probably should simply because I like having the person in my space more regularly. And I often keep partners around past the relationship expiration date, based solely on the fact that they will come over and sit down and watch TV and share a meal and we can curl up on the couch. And so from

a romantic standpoint I'm really not getting anything out of that. But from a pure, I just need somebody in my space ... And I think that's the one thing I do is I tend to throw myself forward too quickly because of the fact that I miss that. And generally speaking romantic partners are better options for instance coming on the couch and sharing meals with. I mean I could do it with non romantic partners, it's just not the same intersection I guess. And it's not necessarily a requirement that they have to be romantic, it's not the fact that it's a romantic relationship, it's just the comfort level just happens to come with a person that just lets you sit there on the couch and enjoy your program. Whereas with friends you kind of feel like you're supposed to be doing something. This isn't to say I don't sit down and watch TV with somebody. And I know that Jason and I have sat down and shared a meal and watched a movie. But it's not quite the same as sharing the space (Taylor, 32).

Taylor also notes that for people living alone without an intimate partner, an important intimate connection is missing. The struggle for autonomy may leave people disconnected from other personal relationships in a way that does not happen when one has a partner. There is a joy in having someone else around to share life experiences as well as a pleasure of physically sharing space with others.

Unlike individuals with partners and children, who have some built in social relationships, people living alone must develop and maintain relationships in a variety of contexts. For example, social events can be daunting without another person to help gain entry and provide support in new situations. Mary notes that she struggles when going to parties:

Christmas time, going to parties. That's when I feel like kind of alone. Just you know, they're usually a little bit less relaxed than a barbecue in the back yard. And when you go by yourself, those first couple minutes of breaking the ice, it would be nice if I didn't go by myself. But then I get over it (Mary, 40).

As Mary realizes, it is difficult to take those first steps into a situation but for people living alone. The interviews suggest that people enjoy their time alone but also recognize

that they miss personal connections for their emotional and social support. There is a tradeoff between establishing autonomy and maintaining connection. People give up some social support when living alone but it takes effort to maintain personal relationships while working and caring for one's own needs.

Fearing Isolation

Not only do people living alone miss the personal connection that having a live in and intimate partner brings, there is a concern for what personal disconnection means to those living alone. A regular trope in society is that of the individual who dies alone and is not found until the smell emanates from his or her residence. Popular sitcoms, *Sex and the City* and *30 Rock*, which feature single women living alone, each featured an episode where one of the characters chokes while home alone and worries that she will be left to die. Interviewees, such as this exchange with Amanda, often repeated this concern:

When I first moved into my apartment I was worried a little bit about safety just because I was unfamiliar with it. Now it's not even a big deal to me. But at first I was worried about what would happen if someone broke in. And also because I have diabetes sometimes I worry if my blood sugar gets too low and I were to pass out, what would happen? Like how many days would I be in there! (laughing). My friends assure me that if I didn't show up for work, something would happen. They would do something about it.

It all started because the people that lived below me in my old building moved ... And I ran into her one day and she said, "Come by and visit us. Tony and I say we never go out and if anything were to happen nobody would know for days." And so I shared that story. And I'm like I guess that was a catalyst for me to tell the story, get a laugh and also say, "Plus sometimes I worry about that too. Like what if something were to happen?" I think about that because if you have a chain on the door how are they going to get in?

There's the *Sex in the City* when Miranda chokes and she rams herself up against a bookcase trying to get it out! That on-going theme like thing (Amanda, 35).

Amanda reinforces that she is concerned about living alone and something happening to her with no one to check in. Interestingly, the story stemmed from a similar concern for isolation told by her neighbors who were a couple but Amanda still notes that there is an on-going theme for one's safety when living alone. Steve expresses a similar worry. While he happily travels alone and works long hours, he wonders if his autonomous lifestyle would make it harder for someone to realize that he has been injured at home, saying:

Getting hurt and needing assistance. That's the only thing that worries me. And again that has to do with increasing years, increasing age. I tend to be accident-prone. I've just been a clumsy person my entire life. Like geez, if I were to fall off a stepladder trying to change the lights there and really hurt myself, it could be a while before someone noticed that... In fact it would be work probably that would be the first to notice that, "Hey, Steve's not been around. Anybody hear from him lately?" Whereas with some of my social friends, it could be a week or two before somebody, "Hey haven't been able to reach Steve. Do you know what's going on with him? Is he in town?" That would be their first question. "Did he go back east? Is he off in Berlin again?" So that's the only thing I worry about (Steve, 50).

Steve and Amanda both note that while they enjoy living alone, they worry that such autonomy will leave them disconnected from others. This same concern is echoed by many of the interviewees and being unable to receive the necessary help in time is one of the concerns that people living alone express.

Aside from worries that living alone will leave them injured without resources, there is also a concern that one's mental health may suffer from too much time alone. Taylor notes that he worries about his own mental state if alone for too long:

Mainly because if I spend too much time alone, two things start happening. One, my thought process starts becoming a little strange. I will say like paranoia but paranoia is not quite the right word because it's not like I'm convinced people are out to get me. But I start buying into conspiracy theories a lot faster. That sort of thing starts happening. And two, part of me really does like people. I do like some element of socialization. I suspect I was born an extrovert and I was just banged into an introvert. So there are times where I just need to get out. I don't necessarily have to be interacting with them, I just have to be in their space and listening to what they're doing. And I found that if I don't get that, I start getting strange. And for many years I used the internet as a crutch for that, so I was on many chatrooms, many groups, many socialization things. And it's kind of a hollow life and it's good for feeding negative habits. So again, it's another thing I watch out for is I don't try to live my life on-line any more (Taylor, 32).

Taylor reinforces a fear that too much time alone leaves individuals disconnected and Taylor sees the concerns for his mental health on an extreme level of disconnections. He also notes a struggle between his own enjoyment of his time alone and his desire to just be around others. While he previously used online communities to help build his social network, he and others note that it is important to spend time with other people in person. Similarly, many others feared that by creating an autonomous lifestyle, they will not be able to maintain an intimate connection. For example, when asked about her future, Gina says:

I like living alone a lot more than I ever thought that I would... and in some ways it's that fear I was talking about like, "Oh do I like it too much? Would I be able to live with somebody else at this point?" And the longer I live alone, the more I'm like, "Oh I'm good at it. I enjoy it. I like my alone time." (Gina, 34).

As Gina notes, individuals living alone enjoy their time alone but worry that they will be disconnected from others and that can be harmful, physically and emotionally. Broadly speaking, people living alone recognize the benefits of having control over their own space and time in a way that is not available for people who live with others.

However, this freedom and flexibility comes with the challenges of managing a life alone, feeling secure in one's living environment, and worrying that living alone may be unhealthy for creating new relationships.

Making Big Decisions

For people living alone, there is a desire to create their own space and make the decisions for their life but they also note that sometimes it is hard to make big decisions when alone. Friends and partners not only provide support in making bigger life decisions. For example, when Mary discussed buying her condo as one of the times when she had the most trouble living alone:

Probably buying the place. Like taking on this responsibility by myself. Now that I think about it, that probably would be a good time that you're describing. Just seemed daunting and seemed enormous. I was calling [a friend] crying. "This is scary and so expected and why am I moving when I'm so happy in this little apartment paying only \$800 a month? Why am I picking up a mortgage and stuff?" So that's probably the time I felt alone (Mary, 40).

For Mary, making a big decision that really highlighted the difficulty in living alone. However, Mary was able to call on her social network to help her through the difficulty in making a big commitment. Kelli also notes that it would be nice to have someone else around when making decisions. In discussing a decision to change her working environment, Kelli says:

One of the things I was thinking about earlier today and I think kind of applies, is the biggest piece of making this decision is that it really doesn't affect... living with myself the only person who I affect is myself when I make this decision. So it's kind of... there's no one else and those parameters to work with. So in some ways it makes it easier and in some ways makes it harder. Like I know I can make myself the person I want. I'm the only one who has to live with it. At the same time it would be nice

to have somebody to talk to who would say, "Well no you can't be gone on Tuesday evenings!" Sometimes it would be nice to have somebody to tell me that I can or cannot do something. That would be easier. And I'm the only one who has to live with the decision! (Kelli, 35).

As Kelli makes clear, there is a benefit to living with someone else because others help provide boundaries and not be only accountable to oneself. There is a tension between living alone and having others around when making big decisions. It can be freeing to know that no one else will be impacted by your decisions but it can be tough to be the sole care taker.

Being Stigmatized

While it was noted earlier that many interviews expressed enjoyment of their time alone even when spending time out in public, doing so sometimes carries with it a worrisome stereotype. Jolene notes this concern when she talks about having dinner out at a restaurant alone. Although she has lived alone for more than ten years, she only recently went to dinner by herself. She reports:

I have been trying to do things like having dinner by myself. I don't have a problem going to a restaurant by myself. I've never done it for dinner. I don't know why. I have no problem going to lunch by myself, the dinner thing is something that I'm planning to do. I don't think it kills me to go by myself. I'm like I want to go and I can't find anyone who wants to go with me, I'm just going to go. I did and it was no big deal. No one looks at you like, "Oh you have no friends, you have no life, what's going on?" I don't know what I'd built it up to be (Jolene, 43).

Jolene, like many others, recognizes that when spending time out in public, there is a fear that others will think she "has no friend, has no life." Although she realized that it was easier to eat dinner alone than she suspected, the concern about being stigmatized is real. Tom reveals a similar concern about spending time alone in public places. He notes

that even though he goes out on his own, he often feels lonely and disconnected. Tom

notes:

You go to these places, I think it can be the loneliest thing in the world if you're out socially and you're by yourself. I don't mind walking but I usually try to go some place or have some kind of goal. Like there's a shop I like, so I go there and see what's cooking. Stuff like that versus these bigger social events that are really designed to be out with your friends in. If you go by yourself, it's not the same as going to a bar and having a beer. You're there to be with people. So when you go there it's a little bit depressing because I mean what are you doing? You're just standing around, having a beer with a bunch of people around having a great time and you're just kind of left out. I think we've all been in that situation where you're at some place or having dinner by yourself or whatever. You don't want to be the one who's looked at, or you don't want to be on guard when you're just really trying to get out a little bit. It's weird when you feel like you're being judged for being on your own or you're being kind of singled out literally (Tom, 37).

Tom reinforces the fears of many living alone that there is a stigma to being alone in public. When an individual is alone in public space it reinforces an individual's sense of being an outsider. So while people living alone want to spend time in public situations, there is a tension between "getting out a little bit" and feeling like an outsider.

The interview data suggest that people living alone enjoy their autonomy but also worry about what that autonomy means for their intimate lives, their safety, and the social standing. Nonetheless, these interviews also highlight the fact that people living alone have rich and complex relationships with others.

Time with Others: Creating Connection

For all the concerns about being disconnected from others and leading solitary lives, the interviews show that people living alone are not disaffected loners but well connected and supported even as they enjoy their time alone. The quantitative data also

shows that people living alone spend more time in activities outside the home than their counterparts in other types of households. While some discussed spending time in public in order to find a partner, most personal relationships go beyond a search for a life partner and involve various social and personal relationships. Many remain intimately attached to their families while others develop friendships that serve as family. Couples and parents are often restrained in their external lives by their commitments to children and partners but people living alone have more freedom in making decisions with whom they spend their time. For people living alone, their time spent with others includes close ties with parents, siblings, and extended family; long-standing and new friendships; work relationships; and involvement in the community. Researchers have shown that individuals maintain a variety of social relationships across geographic and time divides (Spencer and Pahl 2004, 2006; Dahlin, Kelly and Moen 2008; Allan 2009). The discussions of friendship show the continuing importance of social networks, especially for individuals who live alone. No matter how one finds their friends, people living alone recognize the importance of maintaining relationships in their lives. Relationships with friends, family, co-workers and neighbors provide support for individuals living alone, assistance to family and friends, and enjoyment with friends, family and community.

Building Social Networks

Creating a home and establishing one's autonomy is important to individuals living alone but creating social networks for support and enjoyment is also important. Through social activities and work people develop new friends and also work to maintain old

friendships for support. Lisa notes that she sees her friends as family and thinks it is important to introduce them to her girlfriend:

They're there just as regulars. I brought my girlfriend there one night. I said, "I want to introduce you to my family outside of work and everything else." And it's very cheers, everyone knows your name. Like literally nine out of ten people who walk through the door I'm like, "Hey Tom, hey Jim." Anyone. People at the bar. I'm on a first name basis with the bartender. And I love that I have that. It's a very cozy pub atmosphere and once you're into that family, it's great. And I love having that (Lisa, 28).

Lisa shows that the regulars at the neighborhood bar are an important social network for her. People living alone gain companionship from friends in the community and those who share common interests. Unlike those living with partners and children, who share activities with their family, people living alone build relationships with friends. In addition to maintaining old friendships, Steve notes that he has gained important friendships when he was younger and hanging out at bars but says that those he still maintains as friends have similar interests that go beyond spending time in bars.

They were people that I met like hanging out in the bars here in Chicago. And unlike a lot of other bar friends who lacked intellect or character or whatever, we found that we had common interests. So I don't know. It's just this symbiotic type of relationship there (Steve, 50).

As Steve notes that shared interests help in the development of friendships, Rick notes that he also maintains friendships through shared interests. Many of his friends came from his previous careers in public transportation and engineering. While he has moved on to a different job, he still maintains contact:

I ended up out of public transportation as a career. But that's where I know my friend Manuel from. So we often talk about transportation geeky things. And in December we flew to Washington DC for a Christmas party. And we went to see the reopened American History Museum. And we went to the transportation gallery and we skipped the rest of it ... And then Barb and Sarah I've know since I came back from Amsterdam and I worked at

this engineering and environmental remediation company where Sarah still works (Rick, 48).

Rick shows how he gained friends through work and even after leaving that career maintains these social networks because of their similar interests and experience.

However, he notes later that he also has friends with current co-workers not because of shared interests but because they have a similar work schedule. Now that Rick works a late night shift, he notes that he has friends from his current job because they work in a small environment with little other interaction.

Jack expresses a similar mode of developing friendships through the workplace. As a bartender, Jack sees many of his local friends during his work shift and largely socializes with others in the bar industry since late night work schedules often conflict with other types of social activities and because his work involves so much public interaction.

The conduciveness of the work environment as well as one's living situation seems to lend itself to certain kinds of social networking as well. Gina notes that her work as a public interest lawyer impacted how she socialized because of money and time:

And so I was living alone in NYC. I was making a public-interest salary. In New York I found life to be very focused around work. But I have really good friends at work, so everything I did was connected with work. But we actually would be more likely to go out on Thursday nights than on the weekends. I would find that a lot of my socializing happened during the week, and then I'd have much quieter weekends. Sort of the opposite of the way you think life is going to be. And there was a lot of bonding that happens in that, and particularly the single lawyers would be the ones who would go out. And not just the single lawyers, but those were the consistent ones (Gina, 34).

As Gina, Jack and Rick show, work impacts how people spend their time but the development of friendships are negotiated in the time outside of work. Gina also notes that she socialized more with work colleagues because in New York people were more

spread out, lived in smaller spaces, and had less money, which made it difficult to socialize in the evenings and weekends. The tight spaces, need to travel a long distance to find an affordable space, and the expense of going out in the city made it simpler to just socialize after work and spend weekends alone or centered at home. Where one lives in relation to friends are important in how individuals create and maintain friendships.

Taylor, who lives in Chicago, has many good friends back in Canada where he was raised. He underscores the importance of maintaining friendships, even when distant, because of the support they provide, saying:

They're actually a really strong support network. They've been my friends for many, many years. And I would say that they are a core friend group from the standpoint of, if I really felt like I was in trouble, I have some folks here locally that I know I could step to. If I got in big trouble, I would probably retreat back to Canada. So I have a really strong group of friends there ... I actually miss that group because they're kind of all three of my circles all spun together. And I don't have to hide any of my three faces with them. But that also might be an extension of I only see them once every couple of years physically. So I can get away with a lot more. So from that standpoint, they're my oldest core group of friends at this point in time. I mean I have friends that are older than they are but as a cohesive group they're the oldest group. They're aware of most of the elements of life and either find it amusing or interesting. They still have a lot of similarities and interests and tastes (Taylor, 33).

Taylor shows the importance of developing a social network that is supportive. He notes that he has distinct groups of friends in Chicago while his long time friends in Canada are aware of all aspects of his life. It is those friends in Canada that provide them the most consistent support even when living far away. Like many people living alone, Taylor has many groups of friends. Some of those groups are distant friends and some live close by. Within his groups, he describes three main connections in the Chicago area as

well as friends in Canada and friends in Germany. Those friendships all provide opportunities for connection and support. Steve describes a similar range of friends:

Again, I think it's a function of getting older, my social network has shrunk considerably. I'm going to say I've got about five or six good friends here in the Chicago metro area. I also have friends elsewhere in the country and I even have some friends overseas. For the most part my friends here locally in Chicago are similar. Gay men. A few women, and actually the three women that I consider to be good friends are women that I've known for numbers of years. One is an old buddy of mine and part of a larger social network that I had back when I was married (Steve, 50).

Steve notes that even though his social network is smaller now that he is older, he still maintains a varied network including those he has known for years. These relationships underscore the importance of having a varied social network. People living alone suggest that they maintain a variety of social relationships from new acquaintances to lifelong friends. Describing social networks as a cafeteria where you can rely on some friends for help in some areas and other friends in other areas, Sophia notes the importance of having a wide variety of friends, especially when you live alone:

So you have a cafeteria thing. You know you have this friend. It's almost like building a cafeteria of emotional and social cycle needs of you get this from this one, this from this one, this from that one. And you may not be looking for those things, but as these relationships develop you find that you have to have different needs met in different places. And maybe single people do that better. I think there is a thought among people, "I'm going to get married and my husband, my spouse, my mate is going to be everything and make me happy." Where I'm finding that we're responsible for our own happiness. And even if I wanted to be married I would have to be totally content and happy with who I am. I would not want to need to have to have you in my life to have my life be OK. In that case then I'm using you and I would bring nothing to that relationship. So I feel only when you have that are you good enough or secure enough that you can be a true partner without weighing down. Then you could complement each other. And I almost feel as a single I'm better prepared to do that than say a married person would be. Not that I'm choosing it, but because I've had to look elsewhere for these things and be content in my own skin, in my own life (Sophia, 48).

As Sophia notes, it is important for her as someone living alone to both rely on herself but also to have a variety of friends to meet separate needs. Individuals living alone must find ways to develop their social networks and maintain connection with others.

Gaining and Giving Support

People living alone develop friendships that share mutual interests and schedules but also provide support. Without a support system at home, individuals rely on members of their family or friendship circles to provide support when things don't go well. After breaking up with a serious boyfriend, Mia's friends provided the necessary emotional backing to help her work through the difficulty. As someone who learned to rely on herself, it was particularly important that her friends reached out to her:

Yes. What did I do? Actually my girlfriends didn't give me a choice sometimes. They said, "We're coming over. Or I'm taking you out." And that helped because I didn't know that I needed it until I was doing it. But they knew and so that was really incredible. And then I started learning yes I need that. I need to be out. And then I would learn to ask for it. I would say, "I'm having a Jason day. Can you talk to me? Can we go out?" And they'd be like, "I'm right there for you honey. I'm right there." And they were. They would drop things and come. And all I'd have to do is say, "I'm having a Jason day." And they're like "OK honey what do you want to do? Let me rearrange my schedule." And it was good. They took good care of me. And I learned to take good care of myself too (Mia, 33).

Mia shows that her circle of friends were important in providing support through a tough time. The support provided by her circle of friends helped Mia to recognize the importance of leaning on others when necessary. In addition to emotional support, at times friends can also provide resources that aren't available to people without extended family, as is the case with Sophia. After breaking her leg and losing income, Sophia was unable to pay her rent, which nearly got her evicted. Fortunately, a friend helped her pay

her back rent until she was able to get herself back on track financially. Sophia notes how important it is to have supportive friends because “people take for granted that you have this extended family which not everybody does.” The development of supportive relationships is not a passive activity but one that people must create throughout their lives.

While Mia and Sophia showed reliance on their friends when in need, many individuals living alone also have close ties to their family. Becca, an only child whose parents live an hour away, maintains close contact with her family and when something good happens in her life, the first people she calls is her dad. She says, “for me, those are the people that I would call to tell what’s going on” but she also recognizes that her parents replace a significant other in her life, noting that her partnered friends would share that information with their significant others before their parents. Similarly, Dee notes that when something bad recently happened at the office, she called her parents first to share the news.

In addition to gaining support from family, people living alone also express the importance of giving support to family and friends. Brian notes that his relationship with his parents is important to him:

Well, these are your parents first of all. I do enjoy spending time with them. It’s not like some guilt complex or something like that. They’re getting older and you definitely appreciate the time that you have with people and that it’s not forever. And certainly with your parents I think you feel that way. And it’s like taking the opportunity. They’re right here. They literally live fifteen minutes from me, ten in good traffic. It’s like take this opportunity to hang out with them more and really enjoy their company (Brian, 31).

Brian notes that he enjoys spending time with his parents but also acknowledges that since they are nearby and getting older, it is important for him to spend time with

them. It is also enjoyable to spend time with family members and provide support. Jolene is close to her sisters but also feels the need to help out when they have projects. While one sister was painting a mural in her niece's bedroom, she says:

I went over a couple of Saturdays to help with that. It's this elaborate rainbow, crazy, that I never would have committed to if it was just me. Seven colors and clouds and all of this. So that would involve going over there. Someone has got to keep the kids company while someone else is painting (Jolene, 43).

Jolene points out that she would not commit to the project on her own but it was important to provide her sisters with support on the project. Support for family members is not only being physically available to help but also many individuals living alone provide emotional support to their families. When asked about her responsibilities outside of work, Margaret notes:

So I have a family. They don't live with me but I have a family. So I will get a phone call from someone, they want to talk about something or want some advice. I'm like family counselor actually! I am. I'm the family counselor (Margaret)

As noted by Margaret, even though she lives alone, her extended family members rely on her to provide support and advice. William also regularly touches base with his mother to provide her needed support. When asked how often they communicate, he says:

Two or three times a week. Anything from fifteen minutes to an hour, depending on how much is going on and how much has gone on. She hates calling people. She will talk if you call her, but she hates calling people. So it's always me calling her (William, 38).

William notes that he calls his mother in order to stay connected and provide her support even though she does not reach out to him. Individuals living alone maintain connections with others by providing support to many. In addition to friends and family,

people are also responsible for activities within their community. Bob points out that he is responsible for many activities at his church and tutoring neighborhood children:

The church. I'm in charge of the altar servers there. Other activities that involved with at church. I lock up the doors after mass on the weekends. And just have responsibility helping all kinds of kids. Maybe tutoring or something like that. So again I would say if something more important that I had to do, I make every effort to try to be there to help them out. So those are really my main responsibilities (Bob, 48).

Bob shows that he feels a responsibility to his church and his community. These activities are important priorities in his life outside of work. He has family nearby but is dedicated to his church. An important part of connections with others is providing support to important people in one's life. People who live alone create these relationships by reaching out to others to both give and gain support.

Staying Connected

While developing social networks and providing support are important to creating connections for individuals living alone, maintenance of long-standing relationships with others also takes precedence. It takes time to keep in touch with people, particularly when those friends live in other cities, states or countries. Many individuals discuss the importance of regular communications with their friends and family.

My sister lives like an hour away. I see her... it sort of depends on the month but I probably see her a couple times a month at least. I talk to my family almost every day. My mom or my dad. And my sister and I probably actually talk a little less frequently but we'll e-mail and we'll see each other. I definitely talk to my sister once a week (Gina, 34).

Gina notes that it is important to keep in contact with her family even when she sees them regularly. Through travel, phone calls, and email, Gina maintains a close

relationship with her sister and parents even though they all live in different states. Mia expresses a similar sentiment in her relationship with her mom. When asked who she talks to regularly, she says:

My mom. I communicate with her every day by email or phone. And I'm her only child and she works at University of Illinois in Urbana/Champaign. And we just check in every day by email and tell each other cat stories or what our evening previously had been like or what our plans are for the day or if anything is going on or if we're going to schedule a call or that kind of stuff. So just the daily minutiae. She knows pretty much everything that goes on with my daily life and I do with her too (Mia, 33).

Mia notes that it is important to talk to her mother regularly even if they are just talking about the "minutiae" of their days. When they find it difficult to find a time to talk, they will schedule a call. Individuals living alone recognize the importance of staying connected to their family through phone calls and email. More and more people note that they maintain friendships through on-line networks. Monique likes to delay phone conversations with her friends because it allows for longer conversations when they do talk. Instead she says, "I'll send a text message, or I'll send a Facebook message. I'll send emails a lot and that's how I do it. It's all electronic."

Mia notes similarly that she makes plans with her friends by text message and email. For Thad, the ability to network through the social networking site, Facebook, has been invaluable for connecting with friends - old and new.

Because it's an instant postcard. You write on somebody's wall and man you just sit there and tap your fingers and wait. And if nothing is coming back, then you fire up a game of Scrabulous with somebody else there. Or you post pictures. And even if you're feeling passive, even if you're feeling kind of voyeuristic, you can see what's going on in other people's lives. Like when I was catching up with [a friend], I'm like, "Well let's see what's going on with his life." So I looked through his pictures. And when we were drinking in the Hancock he was telling me about this party he was at. I'm like, "Is that the one you put on Facebook? I totally remember that."

The lady with the bird hat on her head.” So it’s a great way for me I guess to feel still connected to people that I’m not close to geographically in an instantaneous way that requires no effort on their part. So that’s part of it. And then part of it is just doing outreach too. And it’s great for birthdays. Saved my ass on birthdays! Pop up in that site and it’s just like, “Yep!” (Thad, 28).

Thad notes that even though he is geographically distant from his friends, he is able to keep in touch with them and that is important in maintaining a connection over time and across space. Social networking sites, like Facebook, are the newest of technological advancements that provide opportunities to maintain friendships over long distances. Like telephones, text messages, and emails, social networking sites provide individuals living alone with the chance to remain connected with friends even when living in distant places.

Enjoying Time with Others

Friends are important for enjoyment as much as for support. Much of the time spent with friends is not focused on going out but involves spending time together at dinner, on vacation, or just “hanging out”. Tom mentions that he hangs out with fewer people now than when he was younger but their time together is less focused on doing anything and more focused on just being together. Tom says:

I hang out with two or three people versus these groups of twelve that we used to have. And it happens less frequently but it’s also a lot less drama. We just hang out and watch TV or something (Tom, 37).

Tom points out that the smaller group of people creates less drama than when there was a bigger group and, therefore, he can enjoy the time more. In a similar vein, Mary talks about her relationship with her neighbors, who she sees regularly. They are an important group for not only her enjoyment but for a sense of security. Mary notes:

It's a nice group. There's always somebody to talk to and since I do live by myself it's not unusual for me to go out my back door and go tap on Jen's door and hang out with her for a little bit or talk to Alexis or something. That part I really like. Like I feel like if somebody were walking out of my house with the TV, Jay might say something. It's not anonymous there. And that part's nice (Mary, 40).

Mary points out that she likes to go to her neighbors and "just hang out" when she doesn't have anything else to do. As someone who lives alone it is important to spend time with others. It is an added bonus that she feels her space is safeguarded by her relationship with her neighbors. This time with others also provides people with time to decompress from one's daily routine. During a recent vacation to Los Angeles, Jack notes the pleasure of being able to spend his time with friends even if he was not able to do everything that he wanted. For Jack, the importance of spending time with his friends takes priority over his own desires. In this way, his friendships help provide some order to his activities that would not happen if he were alone. When asked about his recent vacation, Jack notes:

Trip to LA was a lot of fun. I lived out there for a while so I knew the city. My friend Peter is out there who used to work here. He's trying to be an actor. Went out with my friend Jason. We stayed at his brother's place in Santa Monica. We went all over. I kind of wanted to do a little bit more of LA activities. Basically what we did is we went to a lot of bars, which isn't really what I wanted to do. I mean every day we walked down to the beach and got lunch. Did that kind of thing. And at night we'd go out and meet Peter at whatever bar he was working at. Saw a lot of friends. I would have liked to check out the old neighborhood I used to live in, but didn't get around to that. But it was so nice not to think about work. I mean it was the furthest thing from my mind. Like didn't even call or text anybody in Chicago. Like if you text me about work, I'm not responding. That's it. Fix your own problems. I'm on vacation (Jack, 31).

Jack shows that he enjoys spending time with his friends and it is important enough to him that he did not care if he was unable to "check out the old neighborhood." In

addition to the prioritization of time with friends, the time away allowed him to set aside work concerns. Time hanging out with friends provides an important break from the time one spends at work but it also provides an important touchstone when living alone. In this way, time with others allows for balance between time spent alone and time spent at work. Taylor notes that even when he doesn't feel like hanging out with other people, he still forces himself to do it. "And usually I sigh and I heave, but nine times out of ten it was a good call. Nine times out of ten it's better hanging with somebody else than being by myself."

During the interview, Brian spoke of his close relationship with his family but also noted that his relationships with friends were different and "more fun" and worked to find time to spend with friends. The negotiation of spending time with one's family or various circles of friends stems from the fluidity of relationships for people who do not have clearly identified responsibilities to one group of people or another. Jolene is able to manage these fluid boundaries because her sisters are some of her closest friends. Rather than make choices between spending time with her family and having fun with her friends, she relies on her family for fun. Talking about her friends, Jolene notes:

We have a lot of friends in common. My sisters both lived here I think about ten years before I moved to the city. And a lot of my friends I met through them just because they're very interesting people. They like to go out. They go to movies, they go to bars, they go to restaurants. They like to go to the Art Institute. We go to Millennium Park all the time. That was what we did a lot of this summer too, so we'd meet during the week for one of the concerts there. And then some friends I met at work but it's like harder just get to know people at the office I think (Jolene, 43).

Jolene points out that it can be difficult to develop a social network at the office but that she enjoys her time with her sisters and maintains an important connection through

those relationships. Enjoying time with friends and family is an important part of the time that individuals living alone spend with others.

When one has distinct groups of friends, they often find ways to blend these groups. The connection between many groups of individuals often takes place through organized events. When asked about what she did for the weekend, Mary tells a story of meeting her friends at a during weather emergencies. They recently met at their local hangout during a hurricane watch but Mary recalls how it all began.

Yes, it was the blizzard in '04. We spent 11 hours there. We called each other. Like, "Oh my gosh did you see the snow?" I think Patrick started that one. "It's snowing. We need to go." So Patrick and I because we lived in the same neighborhood walked up together. And then we ate breakfast. While I was reading the paper and drinking my bloody Mary at the bar and he was talking to the bartender, the manager was putting out all this snow stuff. And Pat asked where he was going and he explained that they'd run out of bacon and so they needed to bacon and he was going to walk to the grocery store. So Pat said, "I have four wheel drive, so I will drive you." So Pat took him while I read the paper and drank my bloody Mary. And then because we saved breakfast, we got a bunch of free drinks. So we were still there at 11 o'clock that night. It was like a big party. Everybody in the neighborhood was there and everybody was talking and hanging out with everyone else. My brother was there with a bunch of his friends. It was fun (Mary, 40).

Mary notes that she was hanging out with her good friends, neighbors, and brother. This somewhat random collection of people now met regularly when there was a weather emergency. However, the weather emergency is not important but the regular connection to friends is invaluable.

Many individuals discussed special events that keep them connected with their friends and often bring various groups of friends together. Taylor has three distinct groups of friends in Chicago as well as Canadian and German friends who all get invited to his annual Halloween party. He says:

My Halloween party is a big deal. I start planning it six months out to a year. Like I already know what next year's party is going to be. I send out the first reminder invitations to people six months out because I want to give my foreign friends a chance to, "You know if you want to do it you can plan for it. We can do this." And then I give a three month reminder and a one and a half month reminder and a four week reminder. Sometimes I set a theme. Everybody start thinking about their costumes. The theme is X. Impress me. Every year I've done it somewhere else for something different (Taylor, 32).

Taylor points out that he enjoys spending this time with his friends and that the annual tradition is an important part of his social calendar because it is fun and keeps him connected to others. While Taylor has a distinct tradition that brings his friends together, many individuals mentioned the importance of celebrating special events with friends, such as Dee and two of her close friends who regularly celebrate birthdays together.

When asked about important rituals, Dee says:

Birthdays. The two people that I actually named that live here, the one I've know for eleven years and the other one for seven, we always do birthday outings ... The three of us always do something for each other's birthdays. I would say they're my closest friends and they're the ones living here, then that's probably the only kind of traditional thing that we do. My friends are all different religions and all different ethnic backgrounds. Like the one I've known for seven years is Muslim and the one I've know for eleven years Hindu. So as far as Christmas and everything, or even Thanksgiving we're all in different pages. So there's not really one that surrounds specific holidays. I know when certain holidays are as far as when my friend is fasting for Ramadan. So "Happy Ramadan. Have a great Ramadan!" Not really sure how to go about that. We know when different things are so we acknowledge those types of things and let each other do our thing (Dee, 30).

Dee notes that she and her friends enjoy spending time together and see the importance of celebrating together but since they do not celebrate the same holidays, they make it a priority to celebrate their birthdays. For Dee and others who live alone, these special events provide an occasion to connect with one another and build on their long-

standing friendships as well as integrate friends from other parts of their lives. These rituals provide a structure to the relationship that helps solidify its importance to each of them.

People living alone are connected to others in many ways. Their time spent building social networks, providing reciprocal support, maintaining connections, and enjoying time with others helps people living alone to create connection with others even when they live alone and do not have partners or children in their home to help give support and enjoyment.

A Balancing Act: Managing a Home, Family, and Friends

People living alone have fewer externally imposed restrictions to their time and their activities than individuals with partners and children. The lessened responsibility to others does not, however, mean that people living alone do not feel obligations to others. The individuals interviewed described obligations to work, to home, and to self, to friends and to family. Yet, they do not feel the same strain of responsibility to one's partner or children that others may feel. Without the strong pull of external accountability, their time is often pulled in multiple directions. People living alone are able to work different schedules and can sometimes spend hours at work without being pulled away or change their schedule to suit the needs of others. Yet, they must maintain relationships with family and continue to develop relationships with friends.

At the same time, people living alone must manage their own household and their own needs. The connections to work and others are more fluid without externally legitimated boundaries. This fluidity makes it difficult to structure one's time. The individuals interviewed realize the benefits of having a place to themselves and the ability

to control their environment and their time. The sense of autonomy gained by living alone and managing one's own space is only tempered by a concern with regard to social isolation and safety.

Nonetheless, people living alone are not socially isolated but members of many social networks - from extended families, work friendships, and online social networks. When living alone, it is a balancing act to find time to maintain healthy divisions between all areas of one's life. It is a balancing act to negotiate the demands of work, desire for solitude and need for personal interaction. Without the demands of partners and children, there is a flexibility to organize one's time but that time must be negotiated among competing needs. People who live alone must assess their need for time alone with their responsibilities to friends, family, community and work. While work-life balance is difficult to manage when one has unwavering obligations to one's family, these relationships provide a defined boundary outside of work. For individuals living alone, this negotiation is complicated by the fluidity of roles and the ambiguity of boundaries.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES

People living alone must establish boundaries in their lives between the work needed for survival, their own personal desires, and the obligations to their friends, family, and community. Family and social relationships outside of work often impact how much time people can spend at work. Conversely, a need for economic resources means that individuals must often prioritize work to support their livelihood. For people living alone, this is especially true because income is not often supplemented with the income of other household members and social relationships are not available at home so must be found elsewhere. Many sectors of the new economy are utilizing technologies that increase working hours and decrease the boundaries between work and home (Montgomery et. al. 2005). These technologies are promoted as opportunities for flexible work arrangements but often this flexibility benefits the employer and not the employees.

Flexible work arrangements are designed to help individuals balance their time between obligations to work and obligations to family. Even when living alone, individuals are deeply connected to their communities, friends and families (Ferguson 2000; Simpson 2003). Without clear roles within a family, people living alone must work harder to negotiate the boundaries between work and life to find an appropriate balance. However, commitments to work, obligations to family and friends, and accommodating the needs of others make these boundaries difficult to create. My interviews reveal that people living

alone use five strategies for constructing boundaries and finding balance in their lives. By restricting work's influence, protecting work schedules, limiting work friendships, establishing external priorities, sustaining outside relationships individuals living alone create and affirm the boundaries between work and life to establish a more successful balance.

Defining Balance

We have seen individuals living alone work more hours than their counterparts in other household arrangements and also spend more time with others but less time at home. However, it is also noted that for people living alone there is a joy in living alone and a need for connection with others. However, this also leads to a tension between being engaged in the community, working to support oneself and taking care of his or her individual needs and desires. This tension can create an imbalance between what one must do and what one wants to do. Those I interviewed regularly noted that balance is about seeing a distinct separation between various areas of life, especially work and home. Tom articulates this definition of balance that is similar to most individuals interviewed:

I think when you leave your job you should be able to leave it behind. I think when you leave your home you should be able to leave it at home. So not necessarily a lot of overlap. That isn't to say that things don't overlap, but it's just knowing that if you have a problem with one or a difficulty that you're working through with one that it won't necessarily dominate the other. I think that's a healthy balance. It's really the only thing I think I would ever worry about in terms of balancing the two. Making sure that when you're at work you get stuff done, and when you're at home you get to do all the things you want to do at home (Tom, 37).

For most people interviewed, there was a real recognition that to find balance one must be able to draw clear boundary between one's work life and one's home life and not

let the two interfere with each other. However, Amanda recognizes that work-life balance is more than just asserting the line between these two spheres of life but takes active negotiation between what needs to be done and what can be done in an individual's work and home. Amanda recognizes this:

Work-life balance really is a balance. It's not doing everything in your life that you want to do and sacrificing your work. It's you have to get the most important things done at work, thinking about what your priorities are and your reputation moving forward, your quality of work, maintaining that. But being able to say no to things in order to see my family, see my friends. I have a friend I mentioned earlier when we were walking over here who's working 70 hours a week and has been for months. And she went out last weekend to a concert and she said to me, "I've forgotten how good it feels to go out and get out of the house." And to keep that going. Just to be out and see new things, kind of like soak up the world. To be able to do both. But you can't have it all in either side I think. You have to be able to say, "I can't see you this weekend because I have a big product that I have to do at work." But then at work if it's something... I always used to get upset at my manager with the operations team because she was highly disorganized. So at 5 o'clock she would say, "Oh I need this done by the end of the day." And a lot of times I would say, "You know I really can't." Because I knew that she knew about it some hours ago but didn't tell me. And so I kind of pick and choose what's important (Amanda, 34).

Amanda sees a necessity to sacrifice at work and at home to find an appropriate balance between work and home. She notes that it may be important to put considerable time in at work but unless an individual draws a line, work can be consuming. For Amanda, creating balance is an active process that involves prioritization of many responsibilities. Yet, others believe balance is a more fluid concept and creating balance may be working more hours while others may find it necessary to limit work. Brian emphasizes the fluidity of balance:

I think you have to find-you know what that balance is. Everybody has that balance. Some people love to work. They love it. It's their job, it's their life, it's what they do. And if that's your definition of good balance, and that's what you like, more power to you. Go with it. For me it's work hard,

play hard. I don't mind putting in the extra hours but I'm going to have some fun when it's over (Brian, 31).

Brian suggests that for some people a healthy balance would include working more because their job is their life. Yet, Mia notes that after a time of being defined by her job, she has realized that her work cannot define her and it is important to create boundaries:

I think for me it's really easy right now because I enjoy what I do. But my work does not define me. Like my job doesn't define me and that helps my balance because I've had jobs, like when I was the coordinator of Black student affairs, that job defined me. And I was so emotionally invested in it and in the students that I served, that I lived and breathed that job. And there was no balance at all. 24/7 African American coordinator, student affairs. And it burned me out. And I was so young too. And now my job, I have enough professional maturity and enough perspective to know what's reasonable for me to contribute in terms of all my levels of energy at my job. And what's not, like where my boundaries are. And I approach work differently. It's not my identity. I choose to define my identity in my personal life and this is what I do. And that for me is just the biggest way to have work-life balance. And I really like it. But I'm not tied down to my job. I like the 8-5 and that's balance. We have weekends and we have evenings sometimes, but it's not all the time. I don't work a 60-hour work week. I don't think I even work a 50-hour work week. And that helps. When I leave work I'm done for the day (Mia, 33).

Not only does Mia assert that healthy balance means she is not identified by her work but also that she has set hours and can largely keep her work within those hours. However, the hours an individual works are not necessarily an indicator of a healthy work-life balance. For example, Mary asserts that a healthy balance is dependent on how it works with an individual's other responsibilities. Mary says:

Something that you enjoy doing all day long and if you have to put in long hours it doesn't strain every part of you, so that when you do go home you don't enjoy being at home or being with your family or being with your friends. I think I have a good work/life balance. I think my friend Liz does too. But Liz works every single Saturday or every single Sunday. She puts in probably eight hours every weekend from her home office. But I would also say she has a good one because she's really happy. She really likes doing that. Her boyfriend is also an attorney. He's also putting in eight

hours. It's something all of us know, "Lizzie what day are you going to work? Saturday or Sunday?" So I don't know if it's necessarily hours. It's more as long as you're not completely wiped out and you don't enjoy your life at home and you don't meet your responsibilities in terms of relationships, whether it's spouse, friends, children, then I think that's a healthy work-life balance. And I think Liz is a good example. She absolutely works well with her boyfriend because he's on the same page. Doesn't mean that she misses out on any of her friend stuff with me or with all of her other friends. But she works a lot harder than any of us do (Mary, 40).

Mary notes that her friend Liz is able to find balance when working on weekends because she is able to share that time with her boyfriend. Liz can still find balance in her life because she can balance it with her partner. Yet, for people living alone, they do not necessarily have a partner with whom to clearly negotiate time together and time apart. In fact, without those distinct relationships, people who live alone may find it difficult to clearly draw the lines between work and other responsibilities, such as Monique, who sees no need to draw a line between her work and home life. Monique notes:

I don't know. One and the same. ...That's why work is fun for me, so it's stressful at times but I get off on that. I can take that stress and wrap it around something else and make it more positive. I appreciate all the stress that comes with my job because I like overcoming it. And it's the same thing with life. When I come home if I do feel sad or whatever, I'm pretty good at cheering myself up. Like if I start thinking about my dad or something, I will get pictures down and start organizing pictures or something. That makes me feel better. I'm really, really good at getting around stress. If I ever have any. So there's really no balancing to anything because they happen at the same time. I talk [friends] at work and I can check Facebook on my phone at work. And at home if I need something at work I can check my work email at home. And the events I do are like for work, but at the same time they're fun (Monique, 28).

Monique sees work and life as the same for her, yet when discussing her time at work later in the interview, she still clearly draws a distinction between work and home when developing friendships, saying that her time away from work with her boyfriend is

like a vacation, “our jobs are fun and we love who we work for, but at the same time we appreciate how hard it is and how stressful it can be. So this is our time.”

Each of these individuals show a recognition of the importance of finding a workable balance between one’s time at work and one’s time at home. This balance often depends on how individuals draw boundaries between their work and home lives. For people without set outside responsibilities, these boundaries are fluid and must be created because there are not outside individuals that provide structure. They all share common elements in defining and constructing balance between work and life.

Challenges to Balance

While the interviewees recognized that a healthy work-life balance involved separating one’s work from others things in life, the concrete practice was much harder than the abstract concept. Each individual grappled with their own need to work, desire to be alone and need to spend time with others. In the research on work-life balance, a concern for workers is that changing workplaces and a strained economy lead to vague boundaries between work and home and lead to an intrusion of work into the realm of home (Hyman, Scholarios, and Baldry 2005; Montgomery et. al. 2005; Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, and Drescher-Burke 2005). This is particularly true for people living alone who do not have household family members and partners that require attention and help.

Researchers suggest that flexibility within the workplace can provide some workers with control over their work time and lead to better opportunities for finding balance within their lives (Kelly and Moen 2007). However, the expectation of unlimited flexibility may lead people living alone to work more than others and neglect other responsibilities.

Individuals in this study often noted that their schedules were flexible and they could work at times when others could not. This ability to work extra hours comes at a cost of not spending as much time at home or as much time with others as one wants or needs. Flexibility at work may lead to longer work hours without time to meet one's own needs and the needs of friends and family. People living alone struggle to find balance when having flexible lives because they must navigate time at work, community involvement, self-care, multiple important relationships, and reciprocity in their lives.

Working Flexibly

In general, those individuals interviewed noted that because they did have distinct responsibilities at home their schedules were flexible and they could work different hours than their peers with familial obligations. So while they recognize a need to create distinctions between areas of their lives, as individuals living alone these distinctions were often undermined by their ability to be flexible unlike their co-workers with children and partners who it was often noted kept more regular schedules. James notes that while his co-worker has demands outside of work that impact her time in the office, he often attends night programs organized by his office:

Reesa she's pretty 9 to 5 a lot of times. She's here every now and then weekends for maybe a Sunday meeting but she has a child so she's usually out by 5:15 or 5:30. So she doesn't attend as many night programs as I do. So it kind of varies with responsibility and what people do (James, 30).

James points out that his co-worker's obligation to her child structures her work time so that she leaves work at a regular hour and does not spend evenings and weekends

at work. Similarly, Becca suggests that her co-workers with families have a different relationship to the workday. She says:

A lot of them have to catch trains to homes in the suburbs or they have kids they have to get home and pick up. I would say yeah, they're probably in the office earlier in the morning because they take off for school and they go right to work. But I think they're out of there pretty close to 5, 5:30. Some of them commute, and I think they take work probably with them on the train. But yeah I think they're in a little bit earlier, they're out the door a little bit earlier. They have other priorities (Becca, 31).

Becca recognizes that the priorities of her co-workers who commute and have families lead to a different structure to their work day where her schedule is less constrained by outside obligations. Brian also notes that one of his co-workers with "a family" is more focused when in the office than co-workers without those responsibilities:

"when my coworker who is married and has a family shows up, she shows up and she does strictly like boom, boom, boom. Let's get it done" where he notes that "being single, living alone, I have a lot of freedom to kind of create my own schedule" (Brian, 31)

Brian notes that his co-worker's time at work is focused so that she may get out of the office and spend the necessary time with her family. He can create his schedule without constraints from outside. However, this freedom also leads him to spend more time at the office than his co-worker.

The flexibility to work an open schedule is also seen as important in maintaining one's position at work. Negotiating one's own work time can be particularly difficult for those in tenuous position. Rick worked to change his schedule when he realized that he was not always busy. He was able to use some flexibility to his advantage but also recognizes that willingness to be flexible is important if it means keeping his job. Rick says:

So I will do whatever I need to keep the job. So I'm flexible. And actually the hours that I work were my suggestion. I had been working the five eight hour days. And I had been working earlier and I noticed when I got there I wouldn't be so busy and when I would leave it would be busier. So I suggested moving my shift back and then I would sit around for a half day on Friday doing nothing. And I suggested why don't I take that half day I'm doing nothing and add each one of those four hours to M-Thu. And I had an ulterior motive in that I wanted to spend Friday on the beach. Because I had been working noon to 9 and then I suggested 1-10. But the 5-9, I get to spend time on the beach. So yeah, I'm flexible to the hours. Although I really do not want to work Sat and Sun (Rick, 48).

Even though Rick feels flexible with his time, he also sees the flexibility as an opportunity to balance his work time with his own personal needs. Dee emphasizes a similar point about being flexible to negotiate time for individual needs.

Well I'm typically one of those people that will work the weekends. And like I say, I'm probably not going to be doing anything anyway. So from 10 to 2 on a Saturday besides sitting at home watching TV so why not work for some comp time because like I said I don't have to worry about taking my vacation for that. And then you can flex your hours. If you're working until 8 you don't have to come in until like noon. Or you can still come in at the regular time and use that time as comp time ... And if it's an incentive, yeah, definitely going to do it. If there wasn't an incentive I wouldn't be doing it. Somebody else would have to do it or we'd have to draw straws! (Dee, 30).

Both Rick and Dee see benefits in being flexible with their work time. They are able to work more hours when asked but then take that time off when they most need it. They are able to construct a schedule that works for them unlike individuals who must work a more standard schedule to accommodate the needs of their partners and children. However, being flexible is not always to the benefit of those working. Sophia remarks that there are differences in the people who work overnight shifts:

Oh there is. There is. And even my friend Mary. Mary's like, "I don't want to do overnights. I don't get any sleep. I sleep better in my own bed." Most people don't want to do the overnights. They have kids at home. "Crystal, you want my overnight? I'm going on vacation." She's like, "No, I've got

kids at home to get up in the morning.” Or the program manager doesn’t even like doing it because she’s got her fiancée and he doesn’t like her to be gone for the overnight that she doesn’t have to be. So nobody wants to do it. I don’t mind because it’s all the flexibility in the world (Sophia, 48).

Even though Sophia recognizes that she has flexibility in her time, she also notes that few others want to work the overnight shifts. Similarly, Monique notes that she “offered to close every day because I don’t have any kids, I don’t have anything to do. So everybody else has families to go home to, so I offered to close the bank all the time.” Monique does not see her outside responsibilities as important where her colleagues with children are less able to work those hours. Both Sophia and Monique settle for the overnight and late afternoon shifts, respectively, because they have more flexibility than those with other obligations.

For individuals living alone, time is less constrained than that of their counterparts with children and partners. While the same trends for working more hours when in a professional position and fewer hours when working in the service industry or at an hourly wage hold true, people living alone end up working more hours and more of the non-standard hours because of the flexibility in their time and the perception that they have no outside obligations. Yet flexibility within the workplace may also be detrimental to adults living alone, who have fewer defined responsibilities outside of work but a distinct need to work. Jolene recognizes this, saying:

But at the same time, work-life balance when you’re 100% responsible for every expense that you develop in your life, that means I can’t skimp on my job either. I need to do it well. I do it real well. I take a lot of pride in what I do. And part of it is for my own security, to know that I’m gaining skills all the time that are going to be useful to me until the end of my working life. Because I’m obviously not going to be rich unless something miraculous happens. So I try to balance in my own mind what I think is the reasonable commitment to my company that doesn’t own my goals. I’m

not like their best friend. We're not doing humanitarian work or saving lives. So my performance really is no difference to any other person and how they're going to survive in this world (Jolene, 43).

Jolene acknowledges the tension between her need to work, desire to do a good job, and her life outside of work. Like most individuals interviewed, she recognizes that as the sole provider for their household, her work is an important part of her life balance and it must be prioritized, in order to live a more complete life. Yet, work cannot and should not be everything within her life.

Managing Community Activities

This ability to be flexible at work can provide individuals with an important way to balance many responsibilities in one's own time frame; however, it can also cause difficulties when people want to focus on their community and volunteer activities. Work can be a major area of focus for individuals living alone but they are also involved in numerous activities and relationships. A challenge to finding balance involves making time for those activities but not letting them become too much of one's focus. Margaret is less invested in her job but spends much of her time volunteering as an English teacher. She wants to expand this volunteer position into a career and so it takes more time and energy than her paid job. Margaret says:

I think you have to be prepared to separate things. Like you need to leave work at work. Work is done when you leave the office. I have been fortunate to have that because of the nature of my job. I mean as a teacher you don't always leave work at work because you still have the lesson plans and things like that. So I would say the tutoring and teaching and the language classes overlapped into my life more so than my job has. Because this stuff that I'm doing in my extra time is something that's going to become my career, become my job, become my life. So now this is going to encompass all three of those things. This teaching thing, this new career

I'm pursuing is going to become my life. So that has impacted it more so than my 9 to 5 has (Margaret, 41).

Margaret acknowledges that her volunteer position has more impact on a healthy life balance than her paid job; she also expresses concern that it may become her life. When she becomes a teacher, her work will not be separated into time at work and volunteering but those interests will be combined and could take over her life. The people interviewed, like Margaret, are often able to create a work schedule for themselves that can encompass their outside interests but without distinct outside responsibilities they must make an effort to limit their time on any one activity.

Unlike Margaret who is able to pursue her outside interests because her work is not encompassing, Brian feels that his work has not allowed him the time to volunteer. He also notes, like Margaret, that too much commitment to one activity hinder the ability to create balance. Brian notes:

It's a lot of time too. Just work, the time spent at work and other things I haven't been able. I have one co-worker of mine who was volunteering for the Obama campaign, running himself ragged. I mean he's a bright kid, they can use that definitely. Always looking for bright people to volunteer for things like that. But he's working four or five hours there every day after work. And when he comes in after work and he's halfway exhausted and then he goes right back and does it. He's been saying he's so exhausted lately. Part of me admires him and the other part of me says, "Dude you have to slow down. Or volunteer like three nights a week or something, not five nights. I admire your passion but you gotta take care of yourself a little bit or else you're going to go insane." He's doing it on weekends too, doing like full days on weekends. But I would like to get a little bit involved in that (Brian, 31).

Brian is not as involved in activities outside of work as he would like to be because of both his limiting work schedule and a concern about his own time management. He notes that to find a healthy balance, people must develop limits for themselves. Others,

like Bob, commit to many activities in the community but are then pulled in numerous directions. When discussing his responsibilities to church and work, Bob says:

Right, so a lot of times I'm maybe running back in forth. In fact I received a call from the church yesterday asking if I could organize a pancake breakfast on that Sunday. But for some reason they seemed to think I did such a great job. I don't think I did it last year. But again I talked to my boss, but no he's not going to be around himself at the bazaar so he needs me at that booth. So he preferred that I devote as much time as I could at the booth at the bazaar (Bob, 48).

Bob is actively involved in his church and engages in many activities outside of work but when he is asked to choose between work and church activities, he feels an obligation to commit to work. Individuals living alone must make choices between their time at work and time in the community while also making an effort to support themselves and maintain friendships.

Struggling for Self Care

In addition to the struggle for finding time for work and time for outside interests, individuals living alone must find time for self-care within their work lives. This can be particularly difficult for those with jobs that require many hours at work. Jack needs to work to make ends meet but also realizes that so much work negatively impacts his overall well-being and ability to spend time with others. Speaking about his ideal work schedule, Jack notes:

I wish I had a little more time off. Because that would allow me to have my time by myself but then be able to enjoy going out more. Because working in this environment makes me not want to go out. So if I had a little bit more time off... I mean I went to LA this summer and I took seven days off. That's the most time I've had off in a row in three years I think. So when I got back, "God, this is why people go on vacations. It's SO nice." I just had more energy. The people's stories at the bar didn't drive me insane. And I

just recently took some time off just to kind of reset my schedule. I was out late all the time, eating really poorly. And I took five days off just to try to eat healthy, go to the gym more and get on a normal schedule. And that helped a lot. So I definitely would like more time off to get a better mindset so I could just enjoy things that I would like to do. Sometimes working so many days in a row and then going out to dinner, I always feel like I'm at work (Jack, 31).

Jack notes that he usually gets two days off in a row which allow him time to catch up on his own needs and then do some necessary chores or spend time with others. If it were not so important that he work regular shifts, he would like to get three days off in a row so that he could catch up on his sleep, get his chores completed and also spend time with other people. Instead he must make choices between his own needs and the maintenance of personal relationships. Similarly, Sophia recognizes that in order to live a healthy life, she needs to set work aside for her own well-being. Sophia notes:

I'm the one that if I pop in to... I forgot my purse and two of the clients are going off, I'm the one that will take one of the clients on a walk even if I'm off the clock, to make it easier on the other staff. So I don't need that as much. Boundaries, balance. Balance is I'm not there all the time and it's not all I think about. I now take more time for myself. I now say, "OK I need to do this. No I really don't want to do that overnight, I'm too tired." I'll say no. Before I would never say no. I say no now. Not all the time but often enough (Sophia, 48).

Sophia has realized that to have balance she must create boundaries in her life. She used to be a person that would work whenever asked and even work when not one the schedule and being paid. She realized that it was important to limit her time at work and take care of herself.

Finding the necessary time to take care of one's self and home is a struggle for many people living alone. For both Jack and Sophia, the tension between work and self-care is complicated by working hourly wage jobs where working more hours and

maintaining good relationships with supervisors can lead to more monetary rewards. Yet, even those within salaried jobs recognized the power that work has to impact an individual's well-being. One's work schedule, even when self-defined, imposes limits on the time one can spend on other activities. Well-being is not only affected by work but a tension sometimes arises between the need to spend time on one's own needs and the time that is spent with others. Steve acknowledges this tension, saying:

I think as you get older and your energy level runs down and just trying to keep up with daily life. Getting to work, paying the bills, taking care of chores and errands and keeping the house clean. That can be enough some weeks. And then if you have a job where you have a lot of social interaction, not necessarily of a good time, there's times when I get home on a Friday and I tell people, "Look thanks, I really want to see you next week. I just can't do it this week." And there's that constant tension. I want to be socially active, I want to maintain my friendships. And I recognize that maintain means maintenance. You've got to work at keeping friendships together and stuff. But on the other hand, sometimes by the end of the workweek I'm exhausted. I don't have the energy. And sometimes a day of just watching TV, reading and puttering around the house, that sounds like a trip to the Caribbean to me (Steve, 50).

Steve notes that he must make choices between where he spends his time outside of work. The struggle between a desire to connect with others and the need for time alone often impacts the balance of life for people living alone. This can be particularly true when having to negotiate relationships with a variety of individuals. Steve notes that after a long day of work, he feels the need to spend some time alone and take care of his own space. Margaret echoes that need to retreat to her own space after too many weekends of maintaining relationships with her family. Margaret says:

Because I found myself getting burnt out because there are things that I... and this is probably my own neurosis because I like to clean my house and I like to do my laundry and get my groceries done. Let's say one weekend I go to see my dad. The next weekend I go to see my mom. The next weekend I go to see my sister and then I finally get a weekend when I'm at

home. Oh this is great. I don't want to do jack shit. I just want to sit on my ass and watch TV. So after a while you just can't do that (Margaret, 41).

In finding a healthy work-life balance, it is important that individuals find time to maintain the obligations to their household and to themselves. Maintenance of self and household can be difficult when work and others need one's time. These competing responsibilities and needs that must be negotiated but without external boundaries to provide structure individuals must structure their own time.

Navigating Multiple Relationships

The tension is not always just from the side of the individual trying to find time for him or herself either. For some people, their friends expect them to spend time together and are offended when making choices among individuals and groups of friends. Amanda notes:

There are some friends that get hurt if you don't spend as much time with them as with others. Which I find interesting because the amount of time you spend with someone doesn't relate to me in how close they are to you or how much you like them. People have different priorities in their lives and different needs (Amanda, 35).

Amanda does not believe how much time individuals spend together is an indicator of the care in the relationships but her friends do. They assume that she must spend time with them to be a good friend. However, Amanda goes on to say how important it is to spend time with others and to maintain friendships, saying:

I like to go out and do things with people. But this friend isn't really into it. She's dating someone and she's a homebody. So I sort of accommodate myself to whatever the other person wants to do (Amanda, 35).

Even though Amanda wants to go out, it is important for her to make adjustments for other people's schedules and interests. Her friend is less interested in going out because she is dating someone. With a limited amount of time spent outside of work to meet one's own needs, conflicts arise in finding time for all of these activities. During one weekend, Brian had both a fantasy football draft with one group of friends and a housewarming party with another group. He talks about the difficulty in managing various responsibilities. Brian says:

It can get a little tough when you have different groups of friends and doing things on the same weekend. This weekend is kind of a good example. I don't think it's going to create any animosity that I leave after the draft because they're having a party after the fantasy [football] draft is over and chill out. So I'm going to leave and go to a housewarming party. I don't think it's going to create any problems this time, but occasionally that can get a little tough. Sometimes it's like two people are hosting weekends in Wisconsin or two people are going places for a weekend and they both want me to come. And I'm like, "If I pick them, then these people are going to be offended. If I pick them the other people will be offended. Can I work both of them in?" Stuff like that. You just kind of have to navigate that (Brian, 31).

Brian does not have a partner or children that help him prioritize activities so he tries to fit them all in. He does not have structure boundaries on his time. Navigating time between various constituencies becomes even more difficult when one of those groups of people is family.

For people who live alone, there is a tension between the responsibility to his or her family and the desire to spend time with one's friends. Creating an autonomous life may mean celebrating special occasions with friends but an expected obligation to family may create tension in activities. Individuals living alone can find this particularly challenging around the holidays when living in a different area than their biological family.

There is a strain between the desires to spend time developing relationships with friends and seeing one's family. Gina recognizes this struggle:

I actually do feel that there's a little bit of a tension about that in my life. There are times when I would rather spend that time with my friends. But there's this expectation from my family that you spend that time with the family. Thanksgiving is a great example. A lot of people I know don't go to their parents' house. But a bunch of my friends did it together here. And that is not a particularly acceptable mode in my family. So there's that tension. And a couple of times I have done things like had Thanksgiving with friends. And I think that was like... my friends from law school and I, one of whom lives here. We talk a lot and it's like from some Bridget Jones movie about the urban family. And I love that. It makes me really happy when I'm with my groups of friends. It's gotten a little harder in the last couple years as people are more and more coupled off and have kids and their lives are changing. But it's still a really important thing to me to spend those kinds of times with my friends. And that's just sort of hanging out, like the way you would with your family.

And [my married sister] also has more pulling on her from two different directions because of his family. Whereas for me it's more like I have my family and I have my friends. But I don't think that my family or society particularly thinks of legitimate things aside to say... My sister could say, "I'm not coming home for Thanksgiving because we're going to my husband's family." And you can't argue with that. But if I say I'm not going home for Thanksgiving because I want to make a turkey with my friends, then I'm rejecting my family. So there is that (Gina, 33).

Gina sees that she is expected to spend time with her family at the holidays even when she may want to spend it with friends. However, her sister has more defined responsibilities but is also able to miss the holiday with her parents because she has a husband. Gina notes that while the tension lies between obligations to her relationships with her family and her friends, there is also an acknowledgement that those obligations change for friends with their own families. For Gina and others I interviewed, the lack of a relationship or children of her own means that she does not have that type of obligation to take her away from time with her parents even if she is interested in doing something

different. An obligation or desire to be with friends is not seen as a legitimate responsibility but family is perceived as higher priority. Individuals living alone do not have build in structures that help prioritize their time.

Tom expresses a similar sentiment when he thinks about the last holiday that he spent with friends instead of with his mother. It provided a sense of independence and autonomy that is sometimes lost when spending holidays with one's biolegal family. Tom says:

I really did feel like for once kind of independent and adult and that I had my own universe going on, which is hard given the obligation that I have in my family. You feel kind of put upon so it's kind of nice to get a break and have your own thing to just get away from that. Because I think in my efforts to be a good son, I think you give up a lot. You give up your independence; you realize that it's maybe not normal to do this stuff with your mom constantly (Tom, 37).

Some of this tension arises because of an effort to develop meaningful relationships and define oneself independently outside of an individual's biolegal family. For individuals living alone there is a need to create and reinforce their own external responsibilities outside of family. Yet, this is challenging because individuals recognize the importance of honoring both family and friendship relationships. They see a responsibility to their families but must create their own lives as well.

Accommodating Others

In addition the negotiation that takes place between obligations to various friends and family, there are also compromises that must be made to spend time with friends who do not live as close and whose time is not as flexible. Jolene notes that there is a large time commitment to meet up with friends in the suburbs:

The people that I'm friends with in the city, they live here. I can catch them, they can catch me, we can meet and everyone can get home. It's different when they live in [the far suburbs]. For a long time a friend of mine was living out there so many a Saturday I was on metro trucking my butt out there to socialize. We'd go out to lunch and then we'd just go back to her place and hang out ... But all I know is it's a whole day commitment. When we say let's go, I take the ten o'clock train and I know I won't get home until like 9 o'clock (Jolene, 43).

Jolene points out that spending time with her friend in the suburbs was no a quick trip but a long commitment. Similarly, Brian notes that many of his friends with children live out in the suburbs and they do different things because of a need to stay closer to home. His friends have responsibilities to home and family that are not as flexible as his own time. When speaking about one of his friends, Brian says:

He's got a lot of restrictions on what he can do and he's got a kid, a wife, a house and it needs maintenance and all that stuff, in addition to his job. We don't have those restrictions on our life. It's easier for us to do activities around his schedule than it is for him to do activities around ours. So if you want to see him, if you want to hang out with him, this is what you have to accept (Brian, 31).

Brian sees that his own time is more flexible and therefore he can make the effort to reach out and maintain that friendship where the structure of his friend's life makes that difficult. People living alone do not have clearly defined boundaries and therefore are often the one's to accommodate the needs of friends and family with more clearly structured lives. While there is recognition that people with children have different responsibilities, some individuals living alone noted that there was a lack of reciprocity for the time it takes to visit others, such as Margaret, who often makes the trip out to see her sister in the suburbs but her sister is less likely to visit her.

M: My sister lives out in the suburbs. A trip to her house is probably three hours from the time I walk out my front door to the time I walk into hers is probably three hours because I've got to get downtown. I take a

metro, they pick me up from the train station, we drive back to their house. So that doesn't sound like a lot but it takes time to get to the train. It takes time to sit on the train just to get downtown. Then I've got to wait for my Metro to take off and the Metro ride itself is an hour and then it 's another half hour from the train station to her house, or 20 minutes. So it's an event.

K: And does she come into the city?

M: NO! No she doesn't. I've probably gotten her... Last year in 2008 I probably got her to come to the city twice. And that's it.

K: Why do you think that is?

M: Because they're comfortable out in the suburbs. I'm not judging people who live in the suburbs. But people who live in the suburbs tend to stay in the suburbs because they're used to it. They know where everything is, this is their life. And as a city person I prefer to stay in the city. It's what I'm used to. I know where everything is. Same reason. But I guess she's got three kids that she's got to pack up and put in the car and drive her old man out to drive all the way to the lake. I'm like, "Oh cry me a river!" (laughing) Parking. Whatever (Margaret, 41).

Margaret acknowledges that it may be difficult for her sister to make the trip into the city, yet she also expresses some resentment for the effort it takes to make the trip herself. Having flexibility in time and limited definitive responsibilities can be difficult because others may rely on individuals living alone can to maintain relationships. The maintenance of these relationships is important to people living alone in ways that are not as important to people with partners and children. Becca noted that she is the one to initiate plans with her married and parenting friends because they were involved in their own lives and that it was necessary to work around their schedules more than hers. So while individual living alone recognize that their friends are tied to family responsibilities, there can be tension when the accommodations only go one direction.

Boundary Less Lives

People living alone acknowledge that their time is different than the time of their married and parenting relatives and friends. They have flexibility to work longer hours or travel to visit friends because they do not have the constraints that partners and children place on one's life. However, not having clearly defined responsibilities to others can be problematic for people living alone because they must more clearly and frequently define their own boundaries. Literature on boundary creation notes that "symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnar 2002). While boundaries and group distinctions are socially constructed and limiting to individuals, they also provide avenues for the negotiation of resources within an accepted framework. People living alone may be less able to negotiate between time at work, alone, and with others because they do not fit into any clearly understood group. They are not parents or partners in a way that allows them to navigate the different arenas. Research on boundary creation in families find that unclear boundaries among cohabiting couples and between divorced and remarried families lead to difficulty navigating sticky situations among and between parents and children (Brown and Manning 2009). For individuals living alone, the lack of a clear role within society leads to fewer boundaries between parts of life. While a lack of boundaries can provide freedom and flexibility, it can also lead to a difficulty in managing the many responsibilities that individuals bear. For people living alone, it is often expected by employers, friends, and family, that their lives are completely open and free. This leads to a difficulty in putting limits on time in different activities and prioritizing one's own desires. This struggle with boundaries is not just among singles trying to define the boundaries of

their lives alone but often comes from the expectations of others in their social and work circles. As Amanda notes:

One of the things that stuck out the most, I was on the road with my manager and we were talking about how things were going to ramp up. And I don't even remember the context of the conversation, I just remember his comment, he said, "Well maybe if you had a family or a pet then I would consider..." We were talking about working weekends and overtime. And he said something like, "Maybe if you had a family or a pet then it would be a concern." And I said, "You know I do have a family. Just because I'm not married or have kids doesn't mean I don't have a family. And they do enjoy seeing me." It was very strange because he made it seem like those people have an excuse to leave work but what is yours? But he had no work-life balance. So I don't know if he was applying his methodology to everyone. I don't know. It was just a very interesting comment (Amanda, 35).

It was presumed that Amanda did not have obligations outside of work and so she would be counted on to work extra hours if necessary. However, while her boss wrongly assumes that Amanda has a completely open schedule because she is not married, having a partner both restricts and broadens one's schedule. There are two sides to having fewer defined boundaries. Mia notes that having outside responsibilities is restrictive to one's time in a way that her own schedule is not limited:

And then when my girlfriend with little ones, when they have to say not only are they available to come but is their husband willing to watch the kids. Then it's like OK, you really have to check (Mia, 35).

Mia expresses some irritation that her friend must ask her husband if he can shoulder some of the responsibility while Mia has more flexibility in her time. Fewer clear boundaries allows individuals to create a schedule for themselves but also requires that they take on all the responsibilities in their lives. This becomes apparent when one does have a partner, even when living alone. William points out that he has adapted his work schedule to make time for his girlfriend but also she provides help with household chores:

Yeah. Not that I deliberately chose to stay late very often before, but I'm less likely to. She'll do dinner occasionally or do some chores around the house. Take the dog out. I guess because the dog is so new and everything, she takes things off me. And I think perhaps that is what I was getting at more when we're living together, then she'll be... whether she does the laundry or something, she's taking that off me (William, 38).

William notes that having a partner keeps him from working late as often and also takes some of the household responsibilities away from him. This recognition that having a partner provides some relief to balancing one's schedule is echoed by Kelli:

One of the things my sister had told me was one of the best parts of getting married is you never have to clean a spill off your car! Or I guess there might be certain things. If they're managing a household and somebody is better at one thing than another, or likes to do something and the other person doesn't, then I guess maybe you can do more of what you like and less of what you don't in some circumstances. I don't know. I know people who have dogs that they can take turns letting the dogs out. Or with kids, same thing, you can kind of balance that schedule between who's home when. But I don't have a dog, I don't have a kid (Kelli, 35).

Kelli notes that without a partner or other responsibilities, she is not able to negotiate her responsibilities with anyone else. Her sister and husband can each specialize in household tasks or share responsibilities but Kelli is on her own. While children and partners largely provide a boundary with which to help organize one's time, pets can also provide an outside structure to one's time. For Brian, this was particularly noticeable when watching his sister's cat:

I babysat my sister's cat last year. But I recognized my day was much different for that week or week and a half that I was babysitting that cat. I felt like, "I've got to get home because Najinsky..." but he gets pissed when I wouldn't be home at the right time. And when I would show up at the door I would hear meow, meow, the whole time while I'm unlocking. We got into this little routine. He followed me as I walked back to the bathroom and for some reason he loved to jump up on my bathroom sink. And then I'd just give him pets for like ten minutes and he would just love it. We get the treat out, get the tuna flakes out. Do the tuna flakes and then I'd sit down, chill out, and he'd come sit down next to me and he's like,

"Ok, I'm good. People that love me." But I felt that obligation. He had to be fed, and obviously clean out the litter box and stuff like that. But I felt that obligation and it was odd. It was very interesting. One night I went out after work and I felt bad because I was out late. And I'm like, "Poor Nijinsky has been at home all by himself since 8:30 this morning and here it is 11 o'clock. I've got to go home." I'm like, "I've got to go see my sister's cat. I'm ignoring the poor guy!" And oh was he pissed when I walked in the door. He was like meow, meow and looked at me for a while. "Where the hell were you?" But I definitely noticed that. So that was one little thing. It was almost like I wasn't living alone all of a sudden. I had a roommate or I had somebody... I mean it was a cat, but it was still different (Brian, 31).

For the week that he was watching the cat, Brian had to be concerned with his schedule in a way that he did not worry otherwise. The responsibility for caring for a pet signaled a change in his level of obligation that required a change in his choices about how to spend his time. The responsibility for a pet created a boundary between his time out and time in the house that was fluid when he was not caring for the cat.

Rick confirms that owning a pet provides a boundary around his time in a way that it was not delineated before. Since getting dogs, he says that he is less likely to accept overtime, saying "I wanted to go home. And I have dogs. And that's a great excuse. I have dogs." The dogs not only provide a structure to his day but also a "great excuse" for not working overtime. The fluidity of boundaries for people living alone make it difficult to say no to work or others. People without "acceptable" outside obligations are often left without these excuses, as noted by Gina:

Well I think I don't have as many obligations. Like I can make the decision and nobody is going to be upset at me or relying on me to be some place at a certain time. So in that way it's harder to say, "I have to leave at six" or whatever. I wanted to leave, I wanted to come home. I wanted to be able to have dinner with my friends or go to Providence to see my sister or whatever (Gina, 33).

Without a defined outside obligation, Gina and other individuals living alone must create their own boundaries between their obligations to work, self, and others. However, those obligations are not as clearly defined or accepted as the obligations of their partnered and parenting counterparts. People living alone must then reinforce their own boundaries to establish balance.

Establishing Boundaries – Finding Balance

Without clear boundaries on time set by obligations to partners and children, (and maybe pets), I found that the individuals I interviewed use many methods to police their boundaries between work, friends, family, and home. Predominantly, there are five strategies used to help individuals create boundaries to organize time: restricting work's influence, protecting work schedules, limiting work friendships, establishing external priorities, and sustaining outside relationships. These strategies help to keep work from spilling over into other areas of one's life and reinforce the importance of outside relationships for those living alone.

Restricting Work's Influence

As has been noted, it can be difficult to identify a boundary between work and life without having outside responsibilities to help define one's life outside of work. As seen in Governor Rendell's comment regarding Janet Napolitano, one of the stereotypes that regularly stigmatize people living alone is that they are married to their jobs, work unreasonable hours and have nothing else to define them (DePaulo 2006). Yet, individuals who live alone recognize their work is not the only defining factor in their lives. In order

to maintain that distinction, people draw clear lines around their work to restrict work's influence on their lives.

Limiting the influence that work has on one's life means both making decisions about what one will and will not do for work but also how work is defined in life. Rick, previously had a career in transportation but has opted for an hourly job as a presentation designer for an investment firm. In discussing the difference from his previous experience, Rick notes clearly that he "has a job" and not a career, saying:

Well a lot of times a career is money driven, people want to get ahead and it's all money driven. Unless you're with like a non-profit or you have that type of humanitarian career or whatever. So the investment bankers are career driven, these kids right out of college, 22, 24, they're working 60, 70, 80 hours a week. They're there at 9 in the morning and they go home at 3 in the morning. I don't know how they do it. I mean I did it yesterday and I could not do that five days in a row. I'm wiped. And the only reason I volunteered was because I knew today was a half day (Rick, 48).

Rick sees a difference in the definition of a career and a job. When he had a career, there was much more push to work longer hours and set aside outside obligations. To help maintain a balance in his life, Rick chooses to have only a job. He has made an effort to restrict the importance of work in his life. James, who works in a professional career, expresses a similar sentiment, saying "I try not to take it too seriously. At the end of the day, I'm not about to die for this. I'm going to go home at the end of the day." James reinforces that he must restrict the importance work has on his life to leave it at the end of the day.

In addition to using language to create a boundary around one's work life, others restrict work's influence through their actions by refusing to allow work into their time

outside. Becca, works as a marketing executive but still recognizes that her work is only part of what she does and refuses to be accessible whenever necessary. She asserts:

I refuse to get a Blackberry unless I positively need it. I don't need to be accessed every point of the day. If we're doing media, we're not going brain surgery. It's not the end of the world. But I think people these days are just so engrossed and they have to be connected to everything at all times. I just don't feel that way. I don't need a Blackberry (Becca, 31).

Becca sees the possession of a Blackberry as a sign that she does not have a clear boundary around work and can be accessed at any time when she thinks it is less important. By refusing to be accessible, she keeps her work life separate from the rest of her life. Mia takes this even further by making a concerted effort to keep her work materials from coming in to her home. She maintains a clear division between the space for her work and the space for her home. Mia states:

I don't actually bring work into my space. If I am at a recruiting event and I come home late, I leave it in my garage. Like I don't even bring it into the house. If I have to work on the weekends, I go to the office to work. I really like the separation between work and home. And we also have a lot of recruiting events that could be out of town or out of state and so then I travel for the college and that's separate. But I do work on weekends. I prefer to work late than to take stuff home. So I'll just stay at my office (Mia, 33).

Mia's strategy for maintaining balance in her life is to both physically and mentally distinguish between her work and home. To restrict the influence of work on the rest of her life, she would rather work late at the office than bring her work home. Others also noted that in an effort to maintain a difference between the home and work, they would prefer to work late and not let work unnecessarily blend with time outside of work. By acknowledging that work is not important, controlling access outside of work, and keeping one's work at the office, individuals restrict the influence that work has on their lives.

Protecting Work Schedules

Aside from restricting the influence of work on one's life to maintain a distinction between work and home, many individuals noted that they maintain a strict work schedule in an effort to establish boundaries between work and home. Margaret, who works as office manager for a real estate development firm, recognizes that she has limited responsibility or power after the workday ends even if construction happens outside of the standard hours. It provides her with a clear line to end her work. Margaret notes:

Well there's not much I can do about something at 5:30 as far as my job is concerned. Office hours are over not just for me but for other people as well. I mean we have construction and things like that that occur after office hours, but that has nothing to do, I mean I'm not a contractor. That's their portion of the job. I just have to make sure that it gets done, which is my phone call the next morning to say, "Did you get it done?" So the way that my job works is just that there's not much I can do at 6 o'clock at night from home. So I have to let it go (Margaret, 41).

Margaret notes that she there is little to do once the workday is over but the strict work schedule means she must let go of work issues. Similarly, Taylor notes that a specific work schedule allows him to find balance even though he is unhappy with the actual content of his work. Taylor says:

If I didn't dislike the job I have, if I didn't dislike the job, this would be an optimum balance point for me. My hours are fairly clockwork. I have some specific times I know I'm going to work late but I'm offset for it, so it's not like I'm giving it away. I know what nights I'm going to be free. I know what nights almost without fail I'm going to be busy. It's just the fact that the job itself isn't the job I want to do. I mean the circumstances around the job are OK.

I have another rule where I refuse to eat lunch at my desk unless it's an absolute emergency. I think it sets a bad precedent because you're never leaving your job at that point and you're never decompressing. So I usually try to get out (Taylor, 32).

For Taylor, controlling the time he spends at work also means eating lunch away from work. It is also important for Taylor to assert the boundary between work and life by maintaining a strict lunchtime during the day. Becca, similarly, notes that she tries to get away from the office at lunch and encourages her employees to do the same. Having lunch away from the office is a way of maintaining a boundary between time at work and time away from work because it signifies that this time belongs to the individual.

For many interviewees, there was less impetus to get away at lunch and more desire to protect time at home in the evenings and weekends. For example, Jolene notes that she may work late at times, but it was important to have her weekends free. She notes:

I worked out with my boss is that I'm going to be there 8:30 until they need me every day, but I'm not going to check on the weekend and I'm not going to check in the evening. It's never been an emergency because in an emergency I have done that. But it's something desperate that we're waiting to come back and I'm checking to see if I got it. But no, I don't carry a Blackberry and there's no interest in giving one to me. And that's part of the job that I love. This is a different industry. Before I moved to [the city] I worked in hotels and I worked days, nights, weekends. I never want to do that again. I wanted my nights to be my own and I wanted my weekends to be free. And that's what I got (Jolene, 43).

Jolene has created a work schedule that protects her weekend hours even if it means that she may work longer during the evening. However, Jolene is in an hourly wage position and gains monetary benefit if she needs to work a few extra hours. Those in salaried positions were more hesitant to work extra hours unless they knew there was an ability to balance that time with time off.

While most individuals noted the importance of sticking to a regular work schedule to help maintain a division between life spheres, it was often difficult to maintain because of commitment to the job or the desire to benefit from extra work hours or even overtime.

Working for a job that required the maintenance of rigid work schedules was one important way of managing the need to protect the boundary between work and home. During her time as a unionized public defender, Gina noted that the union required that they maintain a set schedule. There was some tension between getting all the necessary work done and maintaining set hours but in the long run, it benefited the work-life balance of both those with family responsibilities and those living alone. Gina says:

But I think the tension between single people and non-single people was more subtle. Like the union didn't really... in some ways the people who had kids would get upset at the single people for not holding a line. A friend of mine who had kids, she was like, "You can't work half five (5:30) just because you can. We need to have a unified front." So it was sort of interesting, depending on people's personality. And I think also because attorneys... when I got there I was like, "I don't understand why I need to be in a union. I'm a professional." But I certainly appreciated it within a very short while (Gina, 33).

The importance of union solidarity is noted as a reason to maintain a strict schedule for both individuals with family obligations and those without but it can also be seen as a concern for career advancement. People with partners and children are not usually able to work unlimited hours because of their outside obligations and if people living alone work more than the mandated hours, they may gain a reputation at more dedicated to the job. Nonetheless, this set schedule allowed a healthy balance between work and life.

Limiting Work Friendships

Another strategy for creating boundaries between work and life is to limit the familiarity with individuals at work. This may be particularly difficult for individuals living alone as it has been noted that work is one of the places that people make connections,

especially as they get older. However, most individuals noted that they tried to keep coworkers, especially those in close working relationships, at a distance. Steve notes the importance of keeping people at a distance because it can jeopardize one's own work:

When I first started there, there was a lot of that socializing but what I found in the long term is if you start really forming those... if the relationship becomes one more friendship than coworker, then you could be in a very difficult situation if that person leaves you in the lurch, does something wrong. Because then you feel like, "Oh man this guy is my friend and I've got to rat him out. Or I'm really angry because he left me holding the bag on something." So I'm going to say about ten years ago I cut back. Although there's still some people there that I could call on in an emergency. And say, "Hey I've got a problem I think you can help me with." But forming close personal friendships with coworkers? And it's not just this place. I've found that before. To me work is work and my personal life is my personal life. I've always tried to keep them pretty separate (Steve, 50).

Not only can friendships at work cause individuals problems if it compromises an individual's ability to do their job or feel secure in their position but it can also lead to resentments within the workplace between co-workers. Tom notes that if there was tension when socializing with co-workers, "the next day and feel like you're being punished in some weird way for something you had no idea was a problem." It is important to Tom to maintain a divide between his work and personal relationships.

At the same time, there is recognition that it can be useful to have a social relationship with people with whom one spends a lot of their time. This is particularly true for people who do not have others with whom to regularly confide. It is important to recognize those activities as part of the work environment and not part of one's social life. Too much familiarity with co-workers can lead to personal as well as professional difficulties; Brian asserts:

Occasionally I take them up on things and have fun. I do definitely place some value in, or sort of respect a little bit the boundaries that you have to set at work to a certain extent. It sort of depends on your relationship to that person at work. There's always that little difference, but I recognize that work is work and personal is personal, play is play. And I think probably why I prefer more often going with my friends is they know me. I don't work with them. It's just a different dynamic, so I think you have to respect that. You have fun with your co-workers but you've got to be a little careful too because you've got to work with them the next day. And you're going to be in the meeting with them the next day. And if you were that fall down drunk guy and you are that fall down drunk guy every single time you go out, that affects your ability to work in that environment, and that affects your relationships with those people. So I definitely recognize that and respect that (Brian, 31).

Brian points out that there needs to be a limit between work colleagues and friends because the dynamic is different. Relationships with co-workers can lead to embarrassment if there is not a clear boundary between what is appropriate in a work social situation and a personal social activity. However, Dee also notes that it is sometimes difficult to maintain your own boundaries when others do not respect those relationships:

I don't really like the whole mixing business with pleasure. I was a hall director prior to this job and when you live and work in the same place, some people that don't know how to set their own boundaries affect you when you're trying to set your own boundaries. So I am very cautious about making sure that that line is drawn with the people that I don't care to hang out with after work (Dee, 30).

Dee notes that it can be difficult to maintain boundaries when others are less willing to draw those lines. Limiting work friendships when an individual cannot say that they must get home to their partner or children requires a reinforcement of those boundaries. This is even more problematic when there is a small work group and it is the supervisor who suggests the social activities as happens with Jolene. Jolene recalls:

Well my boss is very keen on happy hour and I'm very keen on I don't want to do that on my personal time. And so I decline many offers because I don't think it's good for a professional relationship. And it's not that I don't like to party but just last week we won a big deal and supplier wanted to take us out for drinks after work and I didn't want to go. I don't want to be friends with the supplier. Really not there to be their buddy. And so I didn't want to rush out for the happy hour experience with my boss and sit there. And so I made up an excuse and left. I said I was going over to my sister's house to baby-sit the kid. And the next night I actually did go over there. So kind of like in my mind... and my boss knows I have family here and all. And I didn't have any hesitation just bringing that out and saying... Because she is going to give me a hard time if I just say, "I don't want to." So I can't say that. So I just came up with something else because I believe I'm in control of my own life outside of that office and wasn't going to do it (Jolene, 43).

She notes that she does not want her personal time to be spent with co-workers and uses her niece as an excuse to get out of socializing with her boss. Not only does Jolene reiterate the importance of maintaining a line between co-workers and friends, but she also reaffirms that having outside family obligations can provide a set boundary that is not necessarily available to those living alone.

Establishing Priorities

For people living alone, the boundaries between work and home are more complicated than just needing to be home for one's children or partner. Children and intimate relationships are easily recognized as a priority in one's life and those take precedence over work and other relationships. However, when living alone, individuals must find ways to define and establish their own priorities.

Becca notes that to feel healthy in her life, she needed to find balance in her responsibilities and that includes a commitment to her own well-being. For Becca and

others well-being involves her work but it also involves not letting work take precedence from her other needs. Becca points out:

You know I try to not let my work take over my life. I really do. You've got to back away at some point. You can't let it continue. So I try to take minimal work home. I want to do a good job and get it done, but at the same time I don't want to be working until midnight every night. Not for me. I think I do a pretty good job of balancing it all. I do. I enjoy participating in sports so I try to do that as well. So I think I do a pretty good job of balancing everything. I don't know if I can tell you... maybe my number one priority is me! I don't know! At this point probably. To say work is number one? Obviously I need a job and I need to make money and make a living. But I don't know. I think I do a good job of balancing everything (Becca, 31).

For Becca, the importance of putting some of her individual needs ahead of a complete focus on work. She also notes that it is important to prioritize her time with family and time with friends. So while boundary creation is important in creating a distinction between work and home. It is also necessary to develop and maintain boundaries between different groups.

Individuals suggest that they must determine priorities for managing a variety of friendship and family relationships. For many, this means setting aside some activities in the effort to maintain the relationship with others. William has a friend with who he regularly plays videogames and it is important to him to prioritize that relationship.

William says:

We try to get together once a week roughly. And after say two weeks don't mesh then we do feel some pressure to make it work because we've made the implicit promise to each other that we will get this done. And it's a time for both of us to compromise a bit and find a day that will work, whether it's ideal or not. Well we'll rearrange something else. He actually works near where I live so he can get away from work as early he thought he could, so we'll push back and play less but we will get together, even though it's for less time. I will rearrange to meet Margaret, "Let's do

Wednesday instead of Tuesday so I can fit in Zach.” Nothing more dramatic than that (William, 38).

William has a relationship, which is an important obligation, but he also realizes that he wants to maintain his relationship with other friends and that involves making time for friends a priority. Similarly, Taylor has established a system of choosing between important events in his life. He does feel that it is important to keep commitments for events but he also believes that a girlfriend supercedes other activities but social events are more important than just hanging out socially and spending time video-gaming at home is last in order of importance. Taylor asserts:

My social time is dependent on whether I’m pre-booked for an event, I generally won’t cancel an event for something else. There are a couple exceptions to that rule. And again I won’t do a video gaming night if there’s a social night available. I won’t just hang out socially if there’s something to go out to, like a play or a comedy event in town, I would do that. Girlfriend overrides a lot of things, most situations. I think that would be it (Taylor, 32).

For Taylor, establishing priorities between activities is about how he can gain the most social or intimate experience. Others, like Mary, do not create a hierarchy of activities, but instead look for ways to equitably choose between activities and still maintain a healthy balance. Mary talks of the difficulty in choosing activities and her solution to it:

M: I don’t always do it well. I’m getting better. Honestly, especially on the holidays it’s just saying no. Like I used to accept every invitation to everything with all of these groups of friends. And was running into evenings where I was going to [one friend’s]... I’m just going to stop by for a drink, which leads to more than one drink and then you’re talking to somebody and now I’m an hour late to go to the other party. So I’ve just stopped doing that stuff and stopped going to every sales party. They’re all selling candles and pampered chef stuff and I just started saying no. And that frees up my time to do the stuff I want to do.

K: So how do you make decisions about which...

M: First come first served. And during the holidays no more than like six parties for that month. I used to go to all of them and by the time Christmas came around I hated everybody and everything ... Now, whoever sends the plans out first, I'm in (Mary, 40).

Mary uses the same strategy of many others when prioritizing events and choosing between competing requests and chooses based on who asks first. For most individuals, it is important to make choices in advance when establishing priorities. In order to maintain boundaries between various groups of friends and activities it becomes important to make advance plans.

In fact, making plans in advance can provide a way to both create boundaries between numerous priorities but it can also help to preserve the relationship by setting limits as for Mia and her mom. Mia says:

We [Mia and mom] have a four-day rule because if we know that our visit is four days or under, then we're going to both look forward to the next visit. If it's over four days we will not be looking forward to the next visit, we'll get on each other's nerves. So we realized over the years it's better to have a rule. And nobody's feelings get hurt if somebody opts to end the four days before four days. Just say, "I need my space back." No hard feelings. And that works really well for us. So we try to hang out for four days, no more (Mia, 33).

By planning visits for a limited amount of time, Mia and her mom both recognize the need for their own autonomy in the midst of maintaining a relationship between them. Jolene also notes that planning is important in her ability to balance relationships between her family and friends. While she may miss out on some activities, keeping plans is part of the establishment of clear priorities among activities. Jolene says:

The problem is that I really love to get together with my sisters. And we're usually doing something that's planned. So we plan it in advance. Well our friends are a lot more casual and it's like, "Hey want to get together for

dinner or hey let's do brunch tomorrow. Or you want to drive down to Geneva or whatever?" And so it's a lot of those last minute things we're like, "Well no, I'm sorry I can't. I'm booked up." But life is a little bit spontaneous. Not everybody plans everything out. So I'm sure I lose out on a lot of last minute get-togethers. But really not with any regret. It's just like, "What can you do? Things fall on the same day. You've got to make choices." I always try to think about long term credit and short term gratification. But in 13 years will I remember that I didn't go to happy hour at X but I was there for the Halloween parade. I love to go to the Halloween parade. It's so much fun to see all the kids (Jolene, 40).

One of Jolene's priorities is her sisters and niece and nephew but to adequately spend time with them, she recognizes the importance of prioritizing that time and planning around it.

Sustaining Outside Relationships

Having strong priorities to manage relationships between work, family, and groups of friends helps to maintain boundaries between the various responsibilities of individuals. It also helps to sustain those relationships outside of work. Having strong relationships is another way of developing boundaries within one's life. These relationships are priorities for individuals without clearly defined family responsibilities and help to maintain boundaries outside of work. Lisa recognizes that healthy balance requires balance in all areas of one's life. She says:

But I need to have a healthy lifestyle as well as professional lifestyle so I can maintain that balance without having to rely on work to be my sole thing to get me going. And also just maintaining my responsibilities with my friends and family. Making sure I maintain and feel not only fulfillment but feeling of connection. I'm in the right place at the right time. I know what I'm doing. I'm doing more than just living life. I'm connected to life. I'm connected by my friends. I'm connected with my family. When I feel that connection, I think that's an important thing with balancing everything else (Lisa, 28).

Lisa sees her role in life as one that involves not only work and family but her friendships and the maintenance of those relationships as one of the ways that she can keep a healthy balance for herself. Sometimes the maintenance of personal relationships helps to provide a balance in life that does not come from just separating work and home. Personal relationships provide an outlet from the stresses of supporting oneself and taking care of one's home.

People who find solace in their time alone must make the effort to socialize with friends. At the same time, these relationships can aid individuals in defining balance between one's own needs and the importance of being connected to others. For people living alone, it can be easy to separate oneself from other interaction but then work can also take more importance. James echoes the sentiment of many when he notes that it is easy to limit his life:

Just kind of talking with people, people want to hang out. Catch a movie tonight ... I feel obligated there too because I think human connection is really important. Like sometimes you get in a silo where it's kind of like, "OK, I've just got my girlfriend." Or I'm going to work. But it's important to kind of stay out there and just share life with people I think to a certain extent too ... I would consider myself a loner. I do a lot of things on my own. I go to movies alone. I go to dinner alone. I travel vacation alone obviously. But I try to keep friendships and do things with friends like catch movies or things like that, have movie night or game night with friends that live in town. So I try to, but it's more difficult though because I've got so much going on that it's hard to stay consistent (James, 30).

James reports the difficulty in managing all of these relationships in the midst of a full-time job, a t-shirt business, his own writing, and a long-distance girlfriend but still acknowledges that it is important to be a part of the community and to spend time with others. Rather than just separating life into his work and home responsibilities, friendship is another important sphere of life that must be balanced.

Similarly, Steve notes that he usually does not socialize during the week but he will make an effort to meet with one friend for dinner. The maintenance of this relationship is important enough to Steve that he will do something outside of his ideal schedule to maintain.

I've got another friend, gay male friend that we try to go to dinner in mid week and that's about the only mid week socializing I'll do. And it's because of our work schedules. He's not often available on weekends. So if we are going to get together it's usually going to be going out to dinner (Steve, 50).

For individuals living alone, the effort to sustain relationships with others involves recognizing the importance of finding balance between work, personal needs, and connections with others. Acknowledging the importance of each sphere of life provides people living alone with a healthy relationship between each.

There is an attempt to manage time between a quest for autonomy and desire for connections to others while also supporting one's own household. As research on work-family balance has shown, the changing boundaries between work and home make it increasingly difficult to navigate a healthy life balance. While individuals living alone acknowledge the benefit of flexibility within their lives, they also express tensions between multiple social responsibilities and relationships.

People living alone must more definitively and frequently affirm boundaries between areas of importance in their lives to ensure a healthy balance. While there is recognition that balance entails maintaining a separation between areas of life, conflicts between work and outside life as well as among one's own needs and the needs of others can make this balance difficult. To find balance, individuals living alone restrict work's intrusion into life, maintain set schedules, prioritize activities, limit friendships at work, and

cultivate outside relationships to help find a healthy balance. These strategies provide boundaries between work and life that are not available for those without distinct roles within families and relationships.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This study has provided an initial investigation into the lives of individuals who live alone – how they spend their time relative to people not living alone and how they think about their time and balance. Within the literature on work-life balance there has been little recognition that those living alone must negotiate relationships with multiple people to find balance. Yet, my research has shown that people living alone work more and spend more time with other people – friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers – than people living with others.

While stereotypes of people living alone often play on the happy go lucky bachelor or the lonely spinster, these stereotypes are far removed from this research which shows men living alone but struggling to manage their own work lives while also taking care of their homes, themselves, and their relationships. Similarly the women in this study are both happily autonomous and connected to friends, families, and community members.

Rather than being disconnected from society and others, most individuals (even the self-described loners) maintain a wide variety of social relationships from the formal work relationships to close personal relationships to more loose community relationships. Additionally, singles living alone are not a monolithic group but a diverse part of the population. Age and gender are two important social characteristics that impact the lives of people living alone. Their different relationship to society makes time balance different

depending on one's social position. Finally, because these individuals are responsible for their time without having someone else that constrains or frees their time or focuses their social identity expectations, it makes it possible to see how these processes work in relation to time.

I began this study to better understand how time is controlled through work; how social networks are created; and how time at work and time at home both constrain and facilitate the creation of social networks for individuals without housemates and partners. Through a mixed methods approach, I was able to show that people living alone spend their time differently than people living with others but not all individuals in single person households have the same constraints or the same opportunities. I was also able to get a better sense of how some individuals living alone think and feel about their lives, commitments, and independence. The primary questions that guided this study were:

- a) Do people who live alone spend their time at work differently than people living with others?
- b) Are there trends in how singles living alone spend their time outside of work?
- c) Do age, race, gender and work impact people living alone differently than people living with others?
- d) How do individuals living alone undertake the "family" tasks of feeding, housework and the establishment of meaningful relationships?
- e) How do individuals living alone make sense of their ability to balance time at work, at home, and with others?

Each chapter was able to answer these questions. Chapters 4 and 5 looked at whether people living alone spent their time differently than others and if age, race, gender

and work significantly affect one's time use. The quantitative analyses supported the idea that individuals living alone have different lives than those in other households.

Individuals living alone are fairly evenly represented throughout the population in the age group studied, ages 25-64, but do not experience time the same way. People living alone spend more time at work than others. Many individuals recognized flexibility in their lives due to limited outside obligations that provide more time to work when necessary.

Nonetheless, those with more controlled retail and service jobs as well as those in lower paying positions are also constrained by their lack of obligations. In this environment, women still spend less time at work than their male counterparts even when their schedules are less encumbered than other women and men.

While they work more, men and women living alone both spend less time on household activities – maintenance and leisure – than their coupled counterparts spend similar activities. For men and women living alone, the difference in time spent on household work is half of the difference between men and women in other households. Both men and women note that living alone allows them freedom to maintain their home as they wish. Living alone allows people to prioritize their own needs over those of others. For individuals living alone in older age cohorts, they are more likely to spend time at home than out with others. This was evident in the quantitative data but also within the interviews where those people living alone over age 35 expressed differences in their desire to go out than when they were younger.

While this increase in time spent at home may signal an increase in isolation among older individuals living alone, these individuals continue to spend more time with others than their coupled and parenting counterparts. So while individuals living alone do

not have others in their households, they are actively engaged with others at work and with friends and neighbors. However, this time with others also decreases for individuals in the older age cohorts. These data do not allow me to know if people are changing their habits over time but individual interviews suggest that is true.

Even so, those younger individuals living alone are not regularly going out in search of partners but rather express a desire to spend time with friends and family even when it is not exactly what they would like. They make an effort to accommodate friends with partners and children in an effort to maintain relationships.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine how individuals living alone make sense of their time and relationships. The flexibility to adjust one's schedule to the needs of others, whether work or friends, is a hallmark of living alone. It is one of the benefits of autonomy but comes with the struggle of not having support at home when things are tough, feeling that one must regularly adapt to the needs of others, and not always feeling that one has enough time to oneself even when alone.

For people living alone, a lack of externally defined boundaries through identification as a partner or parent, leads to a need to more regularly and strongly reinforce one's own needs in terms of time – time at work, time for friends and family, and time alone – in order to create balance.

This research is a step in bridging the gap between the understanding of work-life balance for partnered and parenting individuals and those living alone. This study is one step in bridging that gap. Manageable work-life balance for individuals living alone involves the ability to create meaningful relationships while working more hours. This is particularly difficult for individuals working in swing shift and graveyard shift positions,

who lose out on the time when many others are socializing. Individuals living alone are more highly represented among shift and graveyard workers. They do not have people at home with whom to socialize so they may struggle to find time for creation and maintenance of important relationships.

Study Implications

This research has policy implications not only for individuals who live alone as well as the larger population. Looking at single person households provides us with a lens to understand how work, economic, and social policies interact in an arena that does not have the same outside influences as individuals with partners and children. This lens helps us see how policies and practices impact those outside the intended beneficiaries. The many connections in the lives of people living alone underscore the difficulties and importance of maintaining social relationships while supporting and caring for oneself. The struggle to balance autonomy and time with others among those living alone highlights the importance of looking at the expectations of care in our society.

The understanding that people living alone do not have the same concerns as those in traditional families and relationships but are not disconnected from society or merely looking for a partner involves a cultural shift in our acceptance and understanding of “non-families.” The norms about what is an acceptable and even supported as a path to adulthood is changing and people living alone are at the forefront of this movement. However, current social policies, institutional expectations, and cultural norms do not recognize the differing needs and concerns of singles and people living alone. This study has implications for policy development, organizational practice, and cultural acceptance.

Singles Matter – Policy Development

This research has shown that singles are an active group in society – working more hours and spending more time with others than those in more traditional living arrangements. In the midst of balancing work and social obligations, people living alone must also find time to care for themselves and their own homes. Current policies not only limit the support but also disadvantage singles.

The current national discussion surrounding universal health coverage is one area where individuals living alone and singles can truly benefit. Many jobs provide health coverage of some sort but these benefits are declining and more of the economic burden is placed on the individual. Additionally, many jobs in the service sector do not provide health insurance and self-employed individuals must also purchase their own healthcare. For couples, it is often possible to find healthcare support through a spouse. Outside of the debate over gay marriage, ten states support at least some domestic partnership benefits to committed partners, both homosexual and heterosexual, another 21 states have cities that provide benefits, and some employers provide similar benefits (<http://www.ncsl.org>). Nonetheless, these options are not available to singles without partners or individuals living alone but with partners. Universal health coverage provides an important social support to people living alone. However, even current policy recommendations put a large monetary burden on individuals. For those trying to support themselves, health coverage can come at a prohibitive cost. If decoupled from work or relationship status, healthcare can provide single individuals with an underlying social safety net that is currently unavailable to many.

While a lack of universal health coverage makes preventative health care difficult for individuals without economic means – whether single or coupled, national tax policy disadvantages those not married. Again, the gay marriage debate is instructive, as it has highlighted the variety of advantages allowed those who are married. National and state approval of gay marriage will still treat many citizens unequally. Rather than tying tax policy to relationship status, organizations like the Alternatives to Marriage Project (www.unmarried.org) suggest a move toward individual that will not disadvantage those not in married relationship or choosing to file taxes separately.

In a similar vein, social security taxes are levied on individual work but the benefits can be shared among partners when needed. People living alone are unable to share these resources. Even as individuals living alone work more hours and therefore contribute greatly to the social security program, their social security benefits are lost upon death. Instead of tying social security benefits to individuals, spouses, or children, a beneficiary system similar to that of many insurance and retirement plans would provide equal benefit to workers.

People-Friendly Policies – Organizational Practice

National policy is only one place where singles and individuals living alone are treated unequally. While much discussion in workplaces has moved from looking at work-family balance to work-life balance, the practice has not followed suit. The semantic move needs to be backed up with policy moves that support work-life balance for all individuals, not just those with “family.” As shown, individuals living alone both want and need to engage with many different groups of people. Workplaces can put in place

practices and policies that support the maintenance and development of outside relationships for people living alone as well as others through flexible work that is responsive to workers and support for care-giving beyond one's biolegal family. Rather than focusing on "working families", policies should be responsive to "working people."

As shown by Dahlin, Kelly, and Moen (2008), workplace flexibility is largely driven by the needs of employers rather than employees. True flex work would allow individuals to create a work schedule that allows them the ability to control their time in work and outside of work. Many individuals interviewed in this study noted that their lives were flexible because they do not have outside obligations in the same way as their coupled or parenting counterparts. However, this flexibility is in the realm of their personal lives and not their work lives; many of them would discuss working late or weekends to finish work and feel free to do other things. Flexibility should not be the flexibility to work more or later but instead should be allowed for individuals to leave work when necessary, even if one does not have "family".

Flexibility should not mean limitless work but provide boundaries and limits to the workday for everyone. These practices benefit both people living alone and those with family. One interviewee noted that her union required a standard number of hours for all public defenders. The limit placed on time spent at work benefited singles because they did not work longer hours than their colleagues with partners and children. It also benefited those in relationships because they were not seen as choosing family over work.

In addition to changing workplaces to be flexible to workers and not just employers' needs, it is important to broaden the people who count as care givers. People living alone may not need to provide care at home but still have many people for whom to

care. This includes, extended family members and close friends. When people live alone, they may need close friends to help care for them when sick or in trouble. It is necessary to broaden our view of caregivers to allow individuals to make decisions about how they provide and gain support. Yet, hospitals often limit visitation and medical decision making to those classified as family. Courts challenge inheritance, the ability to sue for wrongful death and protection under domestic violence laws for people that do not have legally acknowledged relationships. Hospital visitation authorizations are a step toward allowing individuals to acknowledge relationships outside of legally recognized family but the burden is placed on the individual and not all hospitals accept such authorizations outright. It is necessary to broaden the acceptance of alternative forms of care.

Life ≠ Family – Cultural Acceptance

Some of these policies carry with them an implicit support for some kind of intimate partnership, if not marriage, as the expected and even wanted form of commitment. However, this path is not desired by or available to everyone. In addition to changing the national policies and organizational practices that disadvantage people living alone, cultural norms must be adjusted to legitimize living alone or remaining single. This can be done through symbolic changes in definitions but also through individual acceptance.

Family life in the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. The current demographic definition of family does not present a complete picture of how individuals interact within traditional families as well as within other social networks and institutions. With the growth of alternative family forms and single people living alone there it is

important of a move away from the traditional demographic definitions of family toward an incorporation of the ways that social networks assume the functions of family. These changes can help legitimate those who live alone.

This need for acceptance was seen through the conversations with many interviewees. Most noted that they did not have “obligations” because they lived alone but still went out of their way to meet with, support, and develop friends and be with family. Additionally, many individuals expressed concern that outsiders felt they were selfish or disconnected for living alone. Yet, these individuals all described rich lives of friendship, self-care, and community that belie both selfishness and disconnection. We must move away from the notion that only those with family have a life.

Study Limitations

This study provided insight into the lives of people living alone at both macro and micro levels. The quantitative evidence provides a generalizable account of the differences in time use between single person-households and multi person-households while the qualitative interviews give insight into how a small group of individuals living alone make sense of their time use. Each of these pieces provides some understanding of the lives of those living alone but there are limitations to both facets of the study.

The American Time Use Survey is a comprehensive look at how Americans use their time and it provides a snapshot of time at one moment. The cross sectional nature of the data allows close look at the activities of a representative sample of respondents. While this data can be expanded to show trends for the population during the time frame of the interviews, it is impossible to know if these trends have changed over time. For

example, the data showed that age was a factor in the time use of individuals but we do not know if those differences are due to changing circumstances for individuals as they mature or if those individuals in the older age cohorts just behave differently and would have also behaved differently when they were younger.

Additionally, the quantitative data does not provide a clear understanding of how the differences in time use are experienced by individuals. The data shows that the only time during the day when more people living alone are engaged with household activities is during the late evening hours. These differences may arise because people are working and spending time with others during the day and early evening hours or because they prefer to work on household chores in late evening hours.

The qualitative interviews were undertaken to provide some substance to the quantitative data and they helped provide a better understanding of the thoughts and ideas among individuals living alone. However, this component of the study is also limited in scope. The interviews were conducted among a relatively small group of interviewees and therefore, provide a detailed understanding of their lives but no ability to make a broader statement about singles living alone. In fact, the snowball sampling technique led to interviews with a number of people in similar fields, education and non-profit management, as well as people with similar worldviews and understandings of the boundaries between work and life.

Finally, the group of interviewees was more homogenous than I would have liked. Although I was able to interview a number of individuals in hourly wage jobs and working off hours, the sample largely comprised individuals with college degrees and outside family resources. I tried but even with incentives was unable to connect with individuals

from lower income backgrounds and in more constraining jobs, such as big box retail stores and restaurants. The limited range of occupations coincided with a limited number of interviews with people of color, particularly individuals of Hispanic ethnicity. I made a concerted effort to interview people from different racial backgrounds but the quantitative data shows that time use is significantly impacted by race and ethnicity so I would have liked to draw more interviews from those sub-populations. Also, the interviews were focused on urban adults who had similar experiences with and expectations for social life activities that may not apply to people living in other settings.

These limitations of the study are mentioned only to say that I am aware of some of the deficits within the research. These limitations do not undermine the overall contribution made by this project. Instead, they provide ways to enhance the current research and directions for future research.

Future Research Possibilities

This research provides an initial glimpse into the lives of individuals who live alone. The analysis has shown that there are some distinct differences between individuals living alone and individuals in households with other adults and with children. Variations in the time use of people living alone in relation to their partnered and parenting peers shows that people living alone do not mirror the time use of others. Additionally, the interviews provided a better understanding of how individuals think about their time. Rather than spending much of their time searching for a life partner, most individuals interviewed balance a complex network of friends and relatives as well as manage their own households and lives. However, this research leads to many possibilities for further

research to gain a better understanding of the lives of people living alone and how that relates to changes within the larger society. The possibilities are expansive but this research project leads me to five areas for further study: single, not living alone; technology and community-building; geography and time use; living alone over time; and age and gender among individuals living alone.

Singles, Not Living Alone

In my original plan for this dissertation, I planned to complete focus groups with individuals who did not live alone but lived with non-romantic partners and families in a manner similar to those living alone. There is anecdotal evidence that some people are unable or unwilling to live alone due to economics, cultural restrictions, and social objectives. These individuals may live with parents, roommates or in shared housing and manage their daily lives similar to those living alone. While I was unable to follow through with this aim for the current study, an understanding of how time use is different when an individual lives with and shares space and resources with others but is not restricted by personal relationships would help to understand the constraints and freedoms provided to those living alone. It will also help look at the role that intimate relationships have on one's use of time. As noted, some of the interviewees were in romantic relationships but did not live with their partners. These individuals expressed a need to organize their time in relation to their partner and it would be interesting to compare those singles living alone and those non-singles living alone to singles living with others.

Technology and Community-building

Through the qualitative interviews, it became apparent that technological advances are both useful and problematic for individuals. There were frequent references to the use of blackberries and email as part of the work environment - both at the office and outside of the office. There was a general feeling that these technologies made it more difficult to separate work from home. On the other hand, email and social networking sites, such as facebook, provided possibilities for maintaining and expanding one's network of friends. Finally, a number of individuals also discussed using or refusing online dating as a means to finding a partner. While these issues are not solely the concerns of individuals living alone, the work flexibility, community-building and friend maintenance that is integral to balance for those individuals living alone suggests that these technologies may have a stronger impact on their lives than the lives of others. It would be interesting to investigate how people living alone utilize or limit their on-line connections to build community, maintain friendships, and work effectively.

Geography and Living Alone

The interviewees in this study were all situated in urban areas with slightly higher costs of living but more amenities than much of the country. However, they were not located in the areas with the highest cost of living. It seems that both the cost of living and the amenities available to individuals may impact whether they live alone and how people manage their time. One interviewee had lived in the New York City area prior to the interview and noted that her time was spent differently because of the space available to her and the distance to travel to visit friends. Anecdotally, it has been noted that fewer

people live alone in the San Francisco area because of the high cost of living in that city. Alternatively, during informal discussions with friends in rural regions, it was also noted the difficulty in maintaining a social life when there are few places to socialize with other singles in the same age group. Many of these people maintain friendships with people in largely different age groups or travel to the larger cities in the region to socialize. At the same time, individuals in those areas who started living alone later in life, due to death or divorce, seem to have a more connected social network than may be possible for people in a more urban area. It would be interesting to investigate these claims of different time use based on geography.

Living Alone Over Time

The cross-sectional nature of this data makes it impossible to know if there are changes among individuals living alone over time. As was noted in the quantitative data, people in the older cohorts who are living alone spend more time in leisure activities at home and less time with others. These differences may be due to differences in priorities and work schedules as one matures or the differences may be related to the patterns of a move toward single living. There may be differences in how people think about their time alone as they mature. In the qualitative data, many individuals over 35 noted that their priorities changed, as they aged. This change in priorities was in part attributed to age but also to recognition that one must make the best of life whether alone or with a partner. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study that looks at people living alone long term versus those living alone prior to, alternating with, or following a time living with others as intimate partners.

Age, Gender and Living Alone

Finally, this dissertation touched briefly on some of the age, gender and racial differences among individuals living alone but did not fully explore the dimensions and concerns on these levels. There is a lot of potential to study individuals living alone over age 64. While men and women are closely represented among people living alone between the ages of 25 and 64, women outnumber men living alone by three to one after age 65. Studies have expressed both a concern for social isolation (Klinenberg 2003) as well as a strong network connection (Hochschild 1973; Trimberger 2006) among this population and a future study that looks at the shared care networks among individuals over age 65 is warranted. With the large percentage of the population of single person households (35%) consisting of individuals past retirement age, there are different concerns for resources and time than for those in the standard working ages. Additionally, it is often noted that women manage living alone after divorce or death better than men. These differences may relate to the skills for self-care developed throughout one's life. The quantitative research in this study suggested that men living alone act more like their female counterparts, particularly in relation to household work, and it may be that men who had lived alone for some time are better able to manage lives alone after death or divorce.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF WITH WHOM CATEGORIES

ATUS WITH WHOM CATEGORIES and GROUPINGS	
ATUS Category	Adjusted Category
Alone	Alone
Spouse	Family
Unmarried Partner	Family
Own Household Child	Family
Grandchild	Family
Parent	Family
Brother/Sister	Family
Other Related Person	Family
Foster Child	Family
Own non-Household Child	External Family
Parents (not living in Household)	External Family
Other non-Household Family Members < 18	External Family
Other non-Household family Members 18 and Older (including Parents-in-Law)	External Family
Housemate/Roommate	Others
Other nonrelative	Others
Friends	Others
Co-workers/Colleagues/Clients	Others
Roomer/Boarder	Others
Neighbors/Acquaintances	Others
Other non-Household Children < 18	Others
Other non-Household Adults 18 and older	Others

APPENDIX B
LIST OF ATUS CATEGORIES

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Eating and Drinking	Alone	Alone Dining	Household Maintenance
Biking - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Doing yoga - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Fishing - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Hiking - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Relaxing and Leisure	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Rollerblading - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Running - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Travel as a form of entertainment	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Using cardiovascular equipment - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Walking - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Weightlifting/strength training - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Working out, unspecified - participating	Alone	Alone Leisure	Household Leisure
Caring for and Helping non-Household Members	--	Community Care	Time with Others
Volunteer Activities	--	Community Care	Time with Others
Consumer Purchases	--	Consumer Services	Household Maintenance
Household Services	--	Consumer Services	Household Maintenance
Professional and Personal Care Services	--	Consumer Services	Household Maintenance
Eating and Drinking	Others	Dining with Others	Time with Others
Eating and Drinking	with Family	Family Dining	Household Maintenance
Biking - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Boating - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Bowling - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Climbing, spelunking, caving - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Dancing - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Doing aerobics	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Doing gymnastics	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Doing yoga	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Fencing - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Fishing - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Golfing - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Hiking - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Hunting - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Participating in equestrian sports	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Participating in martial arts	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Participating in rodeo competitions	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Participating in water sports	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing baseball	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing basketball	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing billiards	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Playing football	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing hockey	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing racquet sports	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing rugby	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing soccer	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Playing volleyball	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Relaxing and Leisure	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Rollerblading - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Running - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Skiing, ice skating, snowboarding - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Softball - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Telephone calls to/from family members	--	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Travel as a form of entertainment	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Using cardiovascular equipment - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Vehicle touring/racing - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Walking - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Weightlifting/strength training - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Working out, unspecified - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Wrestling - participating	with Family	Family Leisure	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Caring for and Helping Household Members	--	Household Family Care	Not Included
Household Activities	--	Household Work	Household Maintenance
Relaxing and Leisure	Others	Leisure with Others	Time with Others
Grooming	--	Personal Care	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Health-related Self Care	--	Personal Care	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Personal Activities	--	Personal Care	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Personal Care Emergencies	--	Personal Care	Household Leisure and Personal Care
Sleeping	--	Sleeping	Not Included
Arts and Entertainment	--	Social Time	Time with Others
Attending or Hosting Social Events	--	Social Time	Time with Others
Attending Sporting/Recreational Events	--	Social Time	Time with Others
Biking - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Boating - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Bowling - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Climbing, spelunking, caving - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Dancing - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Doing aerobics	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Doing gymnastics	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Doing yoga	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Fencing - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Fishing - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Golfing - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Hiking - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Hunting - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Participating in equestrian sports	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Participating in martial arts	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Participating in rodeo competitions	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Participating in water sports	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing baseball	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing basketball	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing billiards - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing football	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing hockey	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing racquet sports	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing rugby	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing soccer	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Playing volleyball	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Rollerblading - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Running - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Skiing, ice skating, snowboarding - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Socializing and Communicating	--	Social Time	Time with Others
Softball - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Telephone calls to/from extfamily members	--	Social Time	Time with Others

ATUS VARIABLES and GROUPINGS			
Activity	With Whom	Descriptive Grouping	Regression Grouping
Telephone calls to/from friends, neighbors, or acquaintances	--	Social Time	Time with Others
Travel as a form of entertainment	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Using cardiovascular equipment - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Vehicle touring/racing - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Walking - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Weightlifting/strength training - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Working out, unspecified - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Wrestling - participating	Others	Social Time	Time with Others
Work and Work-Related Activities	--	Work	Work
Education	--	Not Included	Not Included
Religious and Spiritual Activities	--	Not Included	Not Included
Travelling (not for Entertainment)	--	Not Included	Not Included
Uncoded Data	--	Not Included	Not Included
Using Government Services	--	Not Included	Not Included

APPENDIX C
IRB MATERIALS

Dear {prospective interviewee}:

I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago, conducting dissertation research about single people who live alone.

I am contacting you to ask you to consider speaking to me about your perspective and experiences as someone who lives alone. The purpose of this research study is to determine how single adults think about and manage their time. Adults between 28 and 50 years of age are eligible.

If you are willing to participate, I will conduct a two-hour interview with you. The interview will be tape-recorded, but your identity will be kept confidential in all phases of the research and reporting. You will not be compensated for your time but the findings will help researchers better understand how people who live alone think about and manage their time.

If you have any questions about the purpose of this research, how it will be used, or any issues related to the confidentiality or ethics of this project, please feel free to contact Kimberly Fox at kfox1@luc.edu or 773.764.0889, or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Anne Figert at afigert@luc.edu or 773.508. 3431. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at 773.508.2689.

If you are willing to participate in this study, or if you would like more information which can help you decide, please contact me by phone, letter, or email. My contact information is below.

Thank you,

Kimberly Fox
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Sociology
Loyola University Chicago
6525 N. Sheridan Rd.
Chicago, IL 60626
Phone: 773.764.0889
Email: kfox1@luc.edu

Research Study

Time Use among Adults Living Alone

Be part of a research study on how people who live alone spend their time.

Do you live alone?

Do you work part-time or full-time in a non-managerial position?

Are you between 28 and 50 years of age?

Are you interested in talking about your experiences of time spent at work, in the community and at home?

If you answered YES to these questions, you are invited to participate in a time use research study. The purpose of this research study is to determine how single adults think about and manage their time. Adults between 28 and 50 years of age are eligible.

If you are willing to participate, I will conduct a two-hour interview with you. The interview and focus groups will be tape-recorded, but your identity will be kept confidential in all phases of the research and reporting.

You will receive \$25 for your involvement in this project.

Please contact Kimberly Fox at kfox1@luc.edu or 773.764.0889 for more information.

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Guide for Interviews

Describe yesterday for me.

Work Questions

Tell me about your day at work last Thursday.

Tell me about the work that you do...

What are the expectations for the hours that you work?

Tell me about a bad day that you had at work:

Tell me about the cycle of your work - consistency throughout the week/month/year?

Describe a good day at work:

Tell me what you see as your major work obligations.

Outline your work history for me.

Social Life/Leisure Activities

Tell me what you did Wednesday night. Describe your night:

Tell me what you did last Saturday.

Describe one important person in your life.

How do you keep in touch?

What do you do together?

Do you have any rituals together?

Tell me about your last vacation. Who are you with? How do you make choices about what to do?

Describe your last Thanksgiving.

What do you consider your important social obligations?

Tell me about your relationship history.

Housework Activities

Tell me about your living situation:

Tell me about your dinner last Thursday: What is one of your best meals alone?

What are your major living expenses?

Tell me about the last time your plumbing/car broke down?

Community/Civic Work Questions

Tell me about the kinds of activities involve you in your community...

Are you involved in any religious organizations?

Are you actively involved in social clubs?

How much time do you spend with friends, family, and acquaintances in the community?

What are the constraints with involvement in community and civic work?

What are the opportunities from your involvement in community and civic work?

General Questions

Tell me about your last really good day:

Tell me about your last really difficult day:

If you had an unexpected day off, what would you do?

How do you define work- life balance?

When do you find it difficult to gain work-life balance?

What circumstances allow you to find balance?

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